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FIELD DAYS IN CALIFORNIA. Illustrated.
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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

FIELD-DAYS IN CALIFORNIA

Bradford Torrey

Field-Days in California

BY

BRADFORD TORREY

With Illustrations from Photographs

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1913

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TO
A. T. S.

NOTE

The greater number of the sketches in this book originally appeared in the *Christian Endeavor World.* Of the others two were contributed to the *Atlantic Monthly* and one to the *Boston Evening Transcript.* All have been largely revised, and some have received substantial additions.

B. T.

Bradford Torrey died at Santa Barbara, California, October 7, 1912, two days before his sixty-ninth birthday. He had sent this book to the Publishers some weeks before, but had not had an opportunity to read the proof. The manuscript had been prepared, however, with that scrupulous care which he always exercised in his literary work, and there is no reason to suppose that he would have made any important alterations, even in detail, if he had lived to see it through the press.

The Publishers have sought to give the volume something of a memorial character by providing a portrait of the Author and illustrations from photographs of localities treated in the book, in two of which Mr. Torrey himself appears.

CONTENTS

A California Beach 1

In the Estero 44

An Exciting Forenoon 58

A Long Procession 70

A Visitation of Swans 80

My First Condor 93

My First Water-Ouzels 100

An Unsuccessful Hunt 111

Yellow-billed Magpies 121

Some Rock-haunting Birds 130

Under the Redwoods 139

In the Santa Cruz Mountains . . . 149

Reading a Check-List 160

On Foot in the Yosemite 170

A Bird-Gazer at the Grand Cañon . . 204

ILLUSTRATIONS

BRADFORD TORREY: 1843–1912. *Photogravure* *Frontispiece*

SANTA YNEZ MOUNTAINS FROM SAN MARCOS PASS, ABOVE SANTA BARBARA, *Mr. Torrey in foreground* 2
Photograph by Herbert W. Gleason

THE BEACH AT SANTA BARBARA 32
Photograph by George R. King

LAGUNA BLANCA, WITH WATER-FOWL . . . 80

A GORGE IN THE SIDE OF MOUNT LOWE . . 96
Photograph by Herbert W. Gleason

AN OAK PASTURE NEAR PASO ROBLES . . . 116
Photograph by Herbert W. Gleason

MIDWAY POINT, SEVENTEEN-MILE DRIVE, NEAR PACIFIC GROVE 134
Photograph by Herbert W. Gleason

VERNAL FALL, YOSEMITE VALLEY, *Mr. Torrey with a friend on the bridge* 176
Photograph by Herbert W. Gleason

THE GRAND CAÑON 216
Photograph by George R. King

Field-Days in California

A CALIFORNIA BEACH

OUR Santa Barbara beach, taken by itself, is not much to talk about. Whether for length, breadth, hardness, or cleanliness, you may readily find numbers to surpass it. But for a bird-student's purposes it is a reasonably good beach, nevertheless; in the run of the year it will show him many a good thing, while for the simple lover of beauty it will hold up its end in any comparison.

Immediately at its back, beyond the railway and the cobweb of telegraph-wires strung beside it, rise the Santa Ynez Mountains, filling the horizon with a magnificent curving reach — a visible reach, I mean to say — of fifty miles, more or less. Easterly, down the coast, where the range, seen from this point, seems to jut into the ocean, the lower peaks are of rarely picturesque shapes; and, dressed in the soft morning or evening light, especially, the whole serrated range, three or four thousand feet in altitude and covered with evergreen chaparral, is of a truly exquisite beauty.

Its neighborliness — some of the higher summits being not more than five or six miles away — and its almost semicircular sweep make it in a peculiarly intimate sense our own. Live here for a year or two, and you will feel it so. It stretches its arms about the city and the beach, and, as it were, holds them in its lap.

And then, straight out at sea, loom the islands, Anacapa, Santa Cruz, and Santa Rosa, all of which, standing in a line, are but severed parts of another mountain range, under water still except for these higher summits. Santa Cruz, the nearest and highest of the three and the one directly south of the city, is said to be twenty miles distant, though in a favorable light you might guess it to be less than half as far, and twenty miles long, with a maximum altitude of about twenty-four hundred feet. Scored from end to end with deep, rugged cañons, in which shadows nestle, especially when the morning sun strikes along it lengthwise, the reader must be trusted to imagine for himself how much it adds to the charm of our fair Santa Barbara world as one saunters along the edge of the breakers on a clear, sunny day, with the softest of airs moving in from the ocean, and the temperature graduated on purpose for human comfort, such a day as we have month-long successions of in every year.

SANTA YNEZ MOUNTAINS FROM SAN MARCOS PASS

Mr. Torrey in Foreground

A CALIFORNIA BEACH

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to make some of our knowing Eastern friends believe that any spot in southern California can be comfortably cool in summer. "No need to talk to us," they say with an air of finality, as if logic were logic and there were an end of it; "if it is warm there in winter, it must be insufferably hot in summer."

Well, it is moderately warm here in winter, so warm, at all events, that the gardens, in spite of frequent frosts (the roofs thickly white, it may be, morning after morning for weeks together) — the gardens, I say (and this is one of the California mysteries; I wish somebody would explain it), are bright with a profusion of delicate semi-tropical flowers, fuchsias, begonias, poinsettias, and a hundred more, all in the freshest of condition, the whole season long; and for all that, and though there is no gainsaying that logic is logic, a really hot day in summer is one of the rarest of happenings. Day after day we fortunate Barbaranos read of deadly heats throughout the East[1] and "Middle West," and day after day and week after week, through June, July, and

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[1] Five hundred and odd prostrations in a single day was the word a Boston newspaper brought me within a week. I have yet to hear of the first one in Santa Barbara; but, of course, logic is logic.

August, our better-behaved thermometers fluctuate between sixty and seventy-five degrees, with now and then, not to be entirely out of the fashion, an hour-long mid-afternoon ascension into the lower eighties; and night after night, the mercury in the meantime having subsided into the sixties, or, not unlikely, into the upper fifties, we sleep soundly under a double thickness of blankets.

For my own part I have spent my third summer here, and in that time I have endured — in September — one "heated term," when for five days the sea-breeze failed us, and, as if for our sins, the dry, burning breath of the desert found its way over the mountains; and even that visitation, unwelcome as it was, might truthfully have been called something like comfort in comparison with those periods of day-and-night misery, so many of which I have sweltered through in my old Boston neighborhood. It is pleasant in one's age to escape the freezings and thawings and, worst of all, the indoor confinement of a New England winter; but it is pleasanter still, if you leave the question to me, to escape those wilting, melting, vitality-destroying, homicidal heats of a New England summer.

Dear old New England! say I. Dear old New England! For me there can never be any other part of the world to compare with it. All that I ever saw of it is precious to me, from the sands of Cape Cod to the mountains of New Hampshire. In my hours of recollection I protest with one of old, "I take pleasure in its stones, and favor the dust thereof."

But, alas! the implacable years are having their way with me; the almond tree begins to flourish; and I no longer relish the thought of those more rigorous chastisements with which our dutiful Puritan mother seeks to toughen her children. Dear old New England! Thrice dear in absence. But, if I am not yet a lotus-eater, I have ceased to play the stoic. It is time to be comfortable, something tells me; and so, as bad boys were said sometimes to do in other days, I have run away from school.

Men of sixty or seventy who proclaim that they feel just as young as ever they did are mostly liars, I think.

Many years ago, when I was dreaming of a possible visit to the Pacific coast, a bit of dialogue was rehearsed to me by way of a deterrent consideration. A friend, who has no fondness for cold weather, though, being a more loyal Northerner than some, he will never run away from it, had been quizzing a neighbor recently returned from California.

"Well, do you like wind?" asked the returned traveler.

"No."

"Do you like dust?"

"No."

"Do you like fleas?"

"No."

"Then you would n't like California."

A discouraging picture. And truthfully drawn, of that I make no question, according to the man's lights. No doubt there are many parts of California — I myself could name one or two — which suffer grievously from all these plagues, as there are many which suffer from months of intolerable heat. But I am talking of Santa Barbara, and here is my testimony: —

In my almost three years of residence I have not seen so much as one flea, though I have heard of those who have had a less happy experience; I have been no more troubled by dust, for all the regular annual drought of seven or eight months, than I have been in many places in the East; while, as for wind, I have never lived anywhere where there was not at least several times as much. In that respect, indeed, the place is nothing less than a wonder. To use the word of the hour, I must believe that it holds the world's record.

A CALIFORNIA BEACH

I remember successive weeks and months in Massachusetts during the cooler season when it was almost impossible to hit upon a day at the seashore in which the air would be still enough to leave a man's eyes clear for nice ornithological observation through a field-glass. Here, taking the twelve months together, there may be ten or twelve hours, mostly at night, of a really smart gale, and as many half-days of a moderately brisk wind, truly moderate, but extremely disagreeable, if one must be out of doors, by reason of the dust it raises. For the rest of the time the strongest movement will be a lazy breeze (two or three, or possibly five or six, miles an hour), barely sufficient, for the most part, to stir the leaves; and you may walk the beach, or recline upon the sands, be it January or July, with a clear vision and complete animal comfort.

At all seasons the beach is an unfailing resource for the stroller. No matter how muddy the country roads may sometimes be in winter (in the adhesive adobe parts of them all but impassable on foot — I have lost a rubber overshoe in such places more than once), nor how dusty the worst neglected of them may become in summer, the beach is always at our service, since it is a wholesome quality of sand to be rain-proof and sun-proof; at the worst of times neither muddy nor dusty. For myself I have had numberless good hours there, and not a few that might truthfully be called exciting.

If I had a bank full of money, I once in a while find myself thinking (and perhaps wiser men than I might own to the same sort of foolishness), I could do this or that. But, after all, what could I do so very much better, school being dismissed, than to go idling up and down this sightly beach, looking or dreaming — and enjoying myself — as the mood befalls?

Happy is the man (I may have said it before, but no matter), happy is the man who has acquired an interest in the world out of doors. It is an investment good for both body and soul.

"Give a man a horse he can ride;
Give a man a boat he can sail;
And his rank and wealth, his strength and health,
On sea nor shore shall fail."

For "horse" write "hobby," and the rhythm may suffer, but the sense will not be damaged, but rather improved.

And here in this favored region, where sea and land meet, with a mockingbird singing his soul out on one side of you and pelicans plunging into the water with a mighty splash on the other side, with the fairest and friendliest of sierras compassing you about, the blue ocean outspread before your eyes, carrying them away and away till the blue heaven drops into it, with seaside verbenas and lovely constellations of yellow primroses overrunning the broken gray-sand windrows just beyond the reach of the breakers, with the breath of the sea filling your lungs, and the sun warming your blood, — with all this, and the hours your own, what kind of man must you be not to be glad of living?

In the round of the year the beach, with the flats and pools immediately adjoining, is visited — to my own partial knowledge, that is to say — by eighty or ninety species of water-birds — waders, swimmers, divers, and the rest.

Of all these, none are more engaging, or more constant, than the dainty little snowy plovers; not snow-white, to be sure, but of a shade light enough to render the name sufficiently appropriate as such things go. Dainty I call them, and so they are; but there should be some more expressive word for it, if only I could call it up; so exceedingly quiet and neat in their dress; trig, shall I say? with a few touches of black — complexion-heighteners, "beauty-spots" — on a ground of gray and white.

Every Eastern bird-student has them in his eye when he first comes to the "coast," and glad enough I was to find them at home — "permanent residents," as the stock phrase is — in goodly numbers here at Santa Barbara, where, after wandering up and down the State, I myself had elected to settle. It is much for a man to be sure of good neighbors.

Every day they are here, and every day it is a pleasure to watch them; now running about or standing at rest on the gray, dry sand — too close a match in color for even a hawk's eyes, one would think; now squatting singly, here, there, and yonder, in the footprints of horses, hardly more than the head showing, one of their prettiest tricks — you may sometimes see fifty at once cradled in this cozy fashion, for shelter against the wind, or by way of a more comfortable siesta, or, possibly, as affording a measure of concealment; and now scattered in loose order along the edge of the surf, picking up the day's ration. An extraordinarily light repast this would seem to be, or, like the Israelites' manna, one very easily gathered, seeing how small a share of the day they spend upon it. Nine times in ten you will find them doing nothing, in what looks like a reposeful after-dinner mood, strikingly unlike the behavior of the common run of birds, which seem for the most part to make the daily meal a sort of continuous refection, an uninterrupted picnic, here a little and there a little, on strictly hygienic principles, from dawn till dark.

As is true of plovers in general, the snowy (smallest of them all, as far as my acquaintance with the family goes) is amazingly sudden and spry in its motions, a sprinter of the first rank, starting at full speed, and scampering before you, head down, till its legs fairly twinkle, they move so almost invisibly fast; and you are ready to name it the beach-runner, as we call the big ground-cuckoo of our hillsides the road-runner. Make the course long enough, and the cuckoo would undoubtedly come under the wire a strong first; but even so a fairly liberal "time allowance" might award the prize to the smaller contestant. Anyhow, it is sport to see the nimble midgets run.

The snowy's voice is an additional item in its favor; a sweetly musical voice, the most frequent of its utterances being a quick, sudden whistle, — not too loud, but full of meaning, — which after a while becomes recognizable as distinct from all other beach sounds, though at first hearing there may seem to be nothing very characteristic about it; just as you are able as a matter of course to name numbers of your friends on hearing them speak the merest word or two, though for your life you could never tell even yourself how you do it.

If you are fortunate enough to startle the bird from its nest, flat on the open sand, and stoop, as you will, to admire the prettily spotted eggs, packed so cleverly, the smaller ends together, on a loose layer, hardly more than a sprinkling, of bits of seaweed stuff, a nest impossible to take up until you have first gummed the parts together as they lie, the plover makes so gentle a remonstrance that you would never suspect it for such but for your own guilty consciousness; all in extreme and most refreshing contrast with the obstreperous behavior of its larger relative and neighbor, the killdeer.

This, also, is a numerous year-long resident with us, every bird noisy enough for ten; with a rasping, ear-piercing, nerve-racking, in every way exasperating voice, the sound of which has often made me vote its possessor a nuisance, especially when I have been seeking a close interview with some rare and interesting visitor, — a thing to be accomplished now or never, perhaps, — and have been thwarted at the critical moment by the causeless outcries of this pestiferous busybody. Father Linnæus knew what he was about when he dubbed it *vociferus.*

Nest or no nest, in season or out of season, it catches sight of you from afar; and up goes its voice, sharp as a razor and loud enough to rouse the neighborhood. Now here, now there, it runs, flies, and stands still by turns, screaming more and more wildly, till its voice literally breaks into shivers; and, although you know better, you begin to think that for once the creature must be in some real trouble. Such agonizing, broken-hearted shrieks cannot be all a make-believe.

And then of a sudden silence falls upon the scene. Nothing has happened; all things remain as they were; but for this time the play is played out.

There is no bird of my acquaintance for which I entertain so hearty a dislike. "Animosity," I was on the point of writing, but that seems an undignified expression as between a man and a plover. I should be sorry to have the species exterminated, but so far as my daily beat is concerned I would cheerfully see its numbers diminished by nine out of ten.

Yet I remember the time in my Eastern days when the sight of a killdeer was cause for loud rejoicing, and its harshest cry a kind of music. Then it was a novelty; once in many years by some accident it came in my way; and rarity will always insure a welcome, or, at the worst, toleration. There is here and there a *man* (I can imagine such a thing, at any rate) who does well enough for an hour now and then, say once or twice a year, but who would speedily become unendurable as a daily intruder.

The killdeer, withal, is a fine, handsome fellow to look at, well set up, as we say (and how well he knows it!), with his bright complexion, his unrivaled twin breast-bands, and his highly ornamental tricolored tail, of which brilliant appendage, by the way, he makes so splendid a use in courtship-time; and, if he possessed the very smallest gift of silence, or knew enough to make himself once in a while scarce, I should never think of grudging him his multitudinous existence. As it is, he is one of God's creatures for which I have lost pretty much all relish. At certain times of the year hardly a day passes in which his ill-timed vociferations do not wear my patience threadbare.

Both the snowy plover and the killdeer are to be found not only along the beach but in the "Estero," so called, a ditch and tide-pool region, some acres in extent, on the landward side of the railway. This eyesore of a place, as the ordinary citizen would describe it, and properly enough from his point of view, sterile (in Spanish *estéril*), homely, unclean, and at low tide not precisely sweet-smelling, is a famous rendezvous for many species of water-birds, and by consequence a favorite resort for the local ornithologist.

Distant be the day, say I, when the city fathers shall take it into their thrifty heads to improve it out of existence, to make room for another park, it may be, or an additional "residence district." It is something better than a residence district already; a first-class caravansery, well patronized year after year by bands of distinguished travelers on their way northward or southward as the seasons shift.

They keep it in mind, it would appear, as a convenient spot in which to break their long journey; for even the stoutest pair of wings may without shame welcome a breathing-space here and there between the neighborhood of the North Pole and the southern parts of South America. It suits their purpose the better that it lies within the city limits, and except by stealth is not invaded by shotguns. Ducks of many sorts swim here in safety by the month together. If ill-mannered dogs find it amusing to pester them, as too often happens, they have only to circle about on the wing for a minute or two and come down again in a different pool or ditch, behind another curtain of reeds.

They have no minds, of course, or none to speak of; great scholars have set *our* minds at rest upon that point, but by hook or by crook they manage to pick up a bit of information here and there, which is better than nothing; and by some means or other — by experience, perhaps, or possibly by hearsay, who knows? — they seem to have ascertained that this is a safe port; and, the living being good, likewise, here they remain, greatly to my satisfaction. This is in the wintry or non-breeding season. None of them nest here, to the best of my knowledge.

Summer or winter, autumn or spring, there is always something stirring on the beach or in the Estero. Among shore-birds, especially, the semiannual migratory movements pretty nearly overlap each other. This season, for instance (1911), only seventeen days elapsed between the disappearance of the last north-bound flyers — a few northern phalaropes, as it happened — and the advent, on the 5th of July, of the first autumnal south-bound travelers, a small flock of least sandpipers.

And by way of illustrating the same point I may cite the case of the sanderlings as observed during the past year. Sanderlings, it should be understood, are natives of the extreme north, their breeding-range, as given by the latest authority, being "from Melville Island, Ellesmere

Land, and northern Greenland to Point Barrow, Alaska, northern Mackenzie, Iceland, and northern Siberia." A long flight, at the nearest, from southern California. Yet during the past year I have noted them on our Santa Barbara beach in every month except June! And even that month was missed by a matter of only four days, since a few birds were observed as late as May 28.

So many stragglers are there tagging in the rear of the main army, and so surprisingly brief is the time that these natives of arctic and subarctic regions tarry in what is to them the home country. Why they should continue to travel so far to make so short a stay is a question which they may answer who can.

A long way from Santa Barbara, I said. But that is the smallest part of the story; for the sanderlings that winter in southern California are the merest handful, a few hundreds or thousands out of millions; the overwhelming majority of the host go much farther south, some of the more adventurous as far as Patagonia; a semiannual hegira for these diminutive creatures, but a few ounces in weight, sufficient to stagger the imagination if we were not so heedless of such things or so accustomed to the thought of them.

But then, we ought to have discovered before this that neither power nor spirit is according to size, a consideration as true of birds as of other people. Witness an extreme case, the case of a hummingbird, a mite of flesh no bigger than a lady's thumb. Hatched in Alaska, this enterprising atom will find its way to southern Mexico and back again to its birthplace before it is a year out of the shell. Man is a wonder, especially to himself; he is even beginning to fly, — and incidentally breaking his neck in the process. But let him look abroad; and, great as he is, he may see cause to be modest in his boasting.

Why do the sanderlings travel so needlessly far? we asked. And can any one tell us why small, frail-looking, weak-seeming bodies like the titlarks, after a winter of content on our Santa Barbara beach, betake themselves, as sure as the spring comes round, to some barren, hurricane-swept, almost uninhabitable mountain-top, a thousand miles away? With a pair of wings, albeit not of the strongest, and the wide world to choose from, why should they settle upon this most forbidding and uncomfortable of all possible dwelling-places?

As I watched them, or endeavored to watch them (for neither they nor I could stand still enough really to see each other), on the summit of Pike's Peak, every one crouching behind its boulder, over the top of which it now and then peeped at the solitary and unexpected human intruder, as there came a momentary lull in the gale, I marveled at their temerity in attempting to live and bring up their nestlings under such distressing conditions.

At the same time I amused myself by fancying that I detected a possible explanation of their uneasy caudal habit. In such a wind, continuous for the most part day after day, no bird could be expected to hold its tail still. It must be forever on the tilt, like a rope-walker's balance-pole. And an action of this kind, early acquired, might, I thought, easily develop into a chronic nervous habit — a tic, to borrow a pathological term — never to be got rid of.

That was fancy, and may be allowed to pass. But the question why such a bird should be contented to live in such a place, and in no other, remains a fair one. Every kind of country, you may say, must have its own kinds of birds; matters are so ordained; and so the naked summits of the Rocky Mountains have their rosy finches and their titlarks. I am glad they have them, but such a reply is pure assumption, and rather begs the question than answers it.

For myself, I attempt no answer, though I am moved to suggest that a bird is something like a man, say what you will about our assumed human supremacy; and it is conceivable that a bird may sing as fervently as any Scotchman or Switzer, "My heart 's in the Highlands."

I myself am neither Scotch nor Swiss; I never saw so much as a distant mountain till I was a man grown; but if I could have my will, not a year should pass without my knowing at least once the exhilaration (there is nothing in the world just like it) of standing under the sky in some high place, the higher and more lonesome, the better. I remember days, a beggarly few, alas! on mountain-tops East and West. And among the brightest of such memories is that of my few hours on Pike's Peak, when these fluttering, storm-tossed titlarks, twittering on the edges of snowbanks, were my sole but sufficient company.

And if a born lowlander delights to spend a few hours now and then at such altitudes, why is it to be deemed altogether surprising that creatures to the manner born, brave and self-reliant souls, needing neither highway nor trail, accustomed from the shell to live in the "untented cosmos" and "travel the uncharted," should find themselves drawn as by an irresistible attraction to spend the summer there? It heartens me to think of them thus holding true to the home-land year after year, let the wind howl about them as it will. And because I once saw them there I see them with the more pleasure, and the more respect, as they flit before me all the sunny winter long on our Santa Barbara beach.

Three quarters of the time at sea-level, and the remaining quarter two or three miles above it, so unevenly do they divide the year; but measured by what is done and enjoyed, the one quarter may well count for more than the other three. And if they are ever touched with homesickness, I believe it is on our zephyr-kissed southern beaches and golf-links rather than on those tempestuous northern mountain-tops. It is good to think that for them as for us there are joys that count for more than comfort.

It has been noticed that a man who courts solitude is apt to be more than commonly fond of animal society. He may have carried his peculiarity so far as to build a hermitage in the wilderness for the purpose of living apart from his fellows, but he can never have too much of the company of rabbits and squirrels. Rats and mice even are welcome; and if a partridge leads her brood past his door, he is happy in the recollection of the event for a week afterwards, and will give it a paragraph later in his book, if he writes one.

In short, the hermit has no objection to neighbors; only they must be of an unobtrusive sort, such as put him under no social obligations, and disturb neither his idleness, one of the most valuable parts of his estate, nor his employment.

The chipmunk does not vex him with criticisms or empty talk, and the sparrow never wishes to know why he does n't go back to the town and live like other people; and if he keeps on reading or writing, or hoeing his beans, the partridge will never dream of taking offense. For a man of his temperament, you perceive, he has contrived to secure some of the chief advantages of both society and solitude.

A saunterer upon the Santa Barbara beach has not retired from the world. He is seldom out of the sight of human beings. They are continually passing to and fro, more or less noisily, behind his back. But at the same time he is little in danger of missing a wholesome proportion of solitude. He may talk aloud, or break into song, and neither disturb others nor be himself disturbed. Even if he carries a field-glass, nobody is likely to ask him what he is looking at, or (about the commonest of questions), how far he can see with it.

And naturally in such circumstances he is much alive to the fellowship of beach-haunting birds. Their affairs interest and amuse him. He sympathizes with them. As Keats expressed it so felicitously in one of his letters, he "takes part in their existence." If their attention is mainly given to matters gastronomic, he does not mind, nor think the worse of them. He cannot sit at their table, but he looks on with pleasure, happy in their happiness. If they take no thought for raiment, and have neither storehouse nor barn, it is by no fault of theirs. They are probably better dressed than he is, more comfortably and in a thousand times better taste. Let them eat and be merry.

Here, for instance, is a flock of sanderlings, a score, perhaps, or, not unlikely, a hundred. The tide is falling; they have had a long rest, sitting in a close bunch on the dry sand while the beach has been flooded; and now see how busy they are! Every time a wave recedes, down they run in its wake to seize any bit of edible life that it may have left behind. Till the last moment they stay, pecking hastily right and left in the suds, not to lose a morsel; and then, as the next breaker comes rolling in, back they scamper up the beach as fast as their legs will bear them. If they get their toes wet, it is no killing matter; but they keep a sharp lookout against anything worse than that. The most timorous of screaming human surf-bathers could not be more insistent upon that score.

If you do not enjoy this animated scene, then it is hard to think what you are made of. All their movements are so quick, so eager, and so graceful! And the birds themselves are so pretty, snowy white, with black, or black and brown, markings.

But they are even more engaging if you catch them at their bath. This they sometimes take in the uppermost reaches of the surf, a hurried and none too comfortable operation, as it looks, since they must retreat every time another wave comes in. They much prefer, I think, the edges of some still tide-pool, where they can dip and splash at their leisure.

About the bathing itself, as far as I have observed, there is nothing peculiar; but after it I once saw them practising what was to me a trick as novel as it was pleasing. Standing on the sand, they sprang straight into the air again and again to a height of six or eight inches, shaking themselves vigorously while so doing, evidently for the purpose of drying their feathers. At the first instant I thought they might be catching low-flying insects such as swarm here and there about patches of seaweed or on the edge of shallow still water. "Bravo!" said I, when I discovered my mistake; "you have shown me something new."

On the same occasion I noticed, what I had often noticed before, their strong propensity for standing and running (hopping, I ought to say, I suppose, lest some youthful critic, shocked at my ignorance, should esteem it his duty to set me right) on one leg. Sometimes half the flock will be thus engaged. And the wonder is that they get over the ground almost or quite as quickly on one leg as on two. At any rate, they keep up with the procession, — which is the principal aim of most of us, — no matter how fast it is moving.

Just why sanderlings, or any other birds, should habitually balance themselves thus in sleep or when at rest, is more than I have ever seen explained or been able myself to divine. A swan, say, with its big body and long neck, or a tall heron, born to go on stilts, or a caged canary — how have they come to find this unnatural-looking, awkward-looking, difficult-looking, Simeon-Stylites-like attitude the acme of comfort?

Fancy yourself trying it to-night instead of getting between the sheets. What long hours of peaceful slumber you would enjoy! Sleeping or waking, even if you are a trained athlete, I would not give you any great length of time in which to maintain the attitude, to say nothing of finding it conducive to repose.

As for *running* on one leg, that, so far as I know, is a trick peculiar to sanderlings. As well as I can recall, I have never found any other kind of bird attempting it; except of course, disabled individuals, which show plainly enough by their awkwardness that their one-legged performances, such as they are, are matters of painful necessity.

Whether sanderlings have the happiness to feel a comfortable touch of pride in this singularity of theirs is a question to be left for such as possess a better, more instinctive, knowledge than I am favored with as to what goes on inside of fur and feathers.

Sanderlings as a rule feed on the beach and nowhere else; but I once knew a small flock to remain for a week or two in a certain part of the Estero. "Those crazy sanderlings" an ornithological friend of mine called them, seeing them so persistently out of their natural surroundings. For myself, I found it difficult at first to feel sure that they *were* sanderlings. For aught

I can say, they may have been "bolters," resolved upon saving the sanderling nation (one of Gilbert White's words) by hatching a new party.

Other small birds, semipalmated plovers, for example, while displaying a preference for muddy flats, still frequent the beach with a good degree of regularity. This very morning a flock of four ran before me down the sands for a mile, more or less, keeping about so far in advance, — twelve or fifteen yards, — and picking up their breakfast as they went, the beach being alive with sandhoppers. On my return, an hour later, I overtook them again; but now they had been joined by three least sandpipers, and within five or ten minutes, while I was still watching them, two stray sanderlings attached themselves to the group, the whole nine being sometimes within a circle of a yard in diameter.

It seems to be characteristic of such diminutive travelers, if they become separated from their natural companions, to associate themselves with any little group of other species on which they may happen to stumble. Strange company is better than none, they think, as most of us must have thought before now on a long journey. The nucleus of this particular flock was the four plovers. To my knowledge they had been on the beach quite by themselves for an hour or more.

Then the three sandpipers joined them, and finally the two lonesome sanderlings descried the group, and said, "Come on! Here's our chance."

By an unusual stroke of luck I had actually seen the company formed. At my last sight of them they were flying down the beach together, as if they had been hatched in the same nest.

A very different bird, whose feeding-habits I have often enjoyed overseeing, is the white-winged scoter, a black duck marked by a sightly white patch on its wing. Flocks varying in number from half a dozen to twenty or thirty are always present, summer and winter alike, and, while more generally seen swimming a short distance out, between the breakers and the kelp, they seem to get much the larger share of their living in the shallow surf inside the last breaker.

There they may be seen daily, bumping about on the sand, very ungraceful, but very busy, and by the appearance of things very successful. Their diet is mostly crustacean. As each wave comes in and breaks, they waddle with all speed into its frothy shallow, dabbing hurriedly right and left, nose under water, not minding in the least if the next billow tosses them ashore again (in fact, this is much their easiest way of getting there); and pretty often, often enough, at all events, to keep them in good heart and flesh, the wave brings them the tidbit they are seeking. The tidbit, I say, but frequently the wriggling captive — crab, shrimp, or what-not — looks a rather unwieldy mouthful as, with more or less of spasmodic tossings of the head, they finally worry it down.

If a horseman happens along, they tumble hastily into the surf, and swim a little way out, diving through the higher breakers and riding the lesser ones, only to return and resume their meal as soon as the coast is clear again. I suspect that they fish mostly at a certain stage of the tide, but as to that I have made no conclusive observations.

Another duck, also common here, wears the name of surf scoter, but I cannot perceive that the designation fits him better than his white-marked relative.

It must be a very foolish or ill-brought-up bird, however, that has only one string to his bow. The scoter has at least two, for besides this raking of the surf he is proficient at diving in deep water. I have watched him at it many a time, leaning over the railing of the pier for that purpose, directly above his head. Then he is anything but ungraceful. With a sudden tip forward and a few vigorous strokes of his legs, down he goes out of sight, and stays there for a longer or shorter period (I have sometimes held the watch on him) according to the water's depth.

How often this deep-sea dredging, as we may style it, is rewarded I cannot say, but I have no recollection of ever having seen him bring anything to the surface. I suspect that the breaker's edge is by much his most remunerative field. There I have seen him when he seemed in danger of acute indigestion, his luck was so good, and his greediness so uncontrolled.

While swimming alongside the pier he is sometimes absolutely heedless of passers overhead. I have repeatedly seen boys — and men, also — stone him; and even when the missile strikes the water within a yard, the silly bird disdains either to dive or fly, but paddles slowly away while the boy laughs and continues to pelt him till he gets out of range.

His manner at such times is the very perfection of stolid indifference. "Oh, go on," he might be saying. "You could n't hit the side of a house." And as a matter of fact I never have seen him actually struck.

One incident I particularly remember. A young fellow who might have been a professional baseball player, from the accuracy of his aim and the strength of his arm, threw a large stone, which splashed into the water within a foot of the duck, almost under him, in fact. The man and his companions were noisily amused, but the bird continued on his moderate course as if nothing had happened. The big stone might have been a raindrop for all the effect it produced. If the creature had been human, I should have set him down for a fool.

And it is well within the possibilities, I suppose, that there are idiotic and crazy individuals among birds as well as among men; birds, for example, that fly by the hour, day after day, against windows, as I have known an occasional robin and English sparrow to do, and will not be driven off, and this absurd, unfrightenable coot. And if this is true, we are perhaps as far astray in judging of the mental capacity of birds in general from such examples as we should be to estimate the intellectual faculties of the German or any other race by what we see in their asylums for the insane and feeble-minded.

Even in forming an opinion concerning so innocent a subject as the intelligence of birds and such like humble people, it becomes us to exercise a proper degree of modesty, and even (why not?) of Christian charity; the more as we are ignorant of their language (which accordingly, in our humanly arrogant mood, we brand as inarticulate), and know nothing of what evidence or explanation they might be able to adduce in contravention of our disparaging verdict. Of all things, being what we are, let us beware of infallibility. It is one of the most insidious of vices, as it is, also, one of the most ill-favored. It makes its home within us all unsuspected, so very cautious we esteem ourselves, the last persons in the world to be guilty of anything like presumption or dogmatism; and then, before we know it, we are delivering guesses for certainties, as if we were throned in the Pope's chair and such a thing as error were impossible. No, no; for our own sakes, if for nobody else's, let us take a lower seat.

The two scoters are on our beach throughout the year; yet there is no reason to suppose that they nest within a thousand miles. In other words, all the hundreds or thousands of scoters that summer along the California coast are what our official Check-List describes as "non-breeding birds."

Concerning this lagging or non-migratory habit of theirs, two questions suggest themselves. In the first place, why should not these barren individuals, as we assume them to be, follow the tribal instinct and go north with their fellows in

THE BEACH AT SANTA BARBARA

the spring, even though they are not to pair and raise young? — a question which, properly considered, might throw some light on the motive of birds in general in undertaking their extremely long and expensive spring journeys. If it is simply a homing instinct, it is hard to understand why these scoters should not remain under its influence even after they have passed the age of procreation.

And, secondly, it would be highly interesting to know why this non-migratory, non-breeding habit should be peculiar to these two kinds of ducks. It is not unlikely, of course, that stray individuals of other species may now and then, for one reason and another, remain behind to pass the summer south of their natural breeding-limits; but so far as the Check-List shows, our two scoters are the only ducks that do this with sufficient regularity, or in sufficient numbers, to make the fact worthy of mention.

Scoters (or coots, as gunners call them) are by no means the only birds that patrol our beach in quest of crustacean dainties. Flocks of Hudsonian curlews may often be seen pursuing the same game, though with their different equipment they naturally follow a different method. They go about the business as our numerous fishermen do when in search of bait, not looking for it on the surface (though I have seen them doing that also), but probing for it. Down goes their long, sickle-shaped bill into the wet sand, frequently for only a fraction of its length; and often as not you may see it bring up a squirming something that looks like a shrimp or a prawn.

This the bird does not at once swallow, as you might have expected it to do. Instead, it drops its prey upon the sand, picks it up and shakes it, drops it again, and so on, the unfortunate victim all the while struggling to get free, till suddenly a final jerk and a gulp, and it disappears down the long bill. Of the precise reason for all these preliminaries I am ignorant. Possibly the crustacean must be held in a certain position before it can be comfortably swallowed. Certainly it is not killed in the process, for it wriggles to the last moment.

I have known a flock of fifteen curlews to take possession of a certain short stretch of the beach, with nothing but a few rods of low sand-hills between them and the noisy asphalt boulevard, and hold it for the greater part of a day, flying out to sea for a little distance when driven to it by too close a passer-by, and immediately returning. That was a day, no doubt, when the fishing was exceptionally good, and they were in the condition of a boy I once knew, who could not go home to dinner when the pickerel were biting among the lily-pads over at Reuben Loud's mill-pond.

On the other hand, I have seen within the same week a flock of eighty curlews on a lonesome stretch of beach beyond the city limits — and the city's protection — that would not allow me to approach within two or three gunshots.

The difference in numbers may have had something to do with the difference in behavior. Fear is contagious, as we all know. The larger the crowd, the quicker and crazier the panic. The more heads, the more speedily their owners lose them. Or it may well enough be that the second flock were shyer than the first because they had recently been molested by gunners. To be shot at once or twice from behind a hedge would have a tendency, I should think, to breed caution in the dullest minds.

Whatever its cause, such increase of suspiciousness, though it may annoy us for the moment, is on the whole a thing to be thankful for. It is a healthy symptom. The birds will live the longer for it, and there will be all the more feeders along the beach.

I speak of Hudsonian curlews. In all likelihood the habits of the larger sickle-billed species are similar; but birds of that kind are anything but common on our beach, and though I have now and then seen them, I have no knowledge of my own touching their table manners.

And the same must be said of the godwits. I have watched them sinking their prodigiously long bills for their full length into the sand, but have never seen what sort of comestibles they bring up. They visit us oftener than the sickle-bills, but in nothing like the numbers of the Hudsonian curlews.

It is not many years since we had on both our coasts a third species of curlew, the Eskimo, so called, or the dough-bird. Wonderfully fat we are told the birds were, so that they would burst open when they fell; greatly esteemed for the table, as a matter of course, and, equally of course, much sought after by pot-hunters. Now they are all dead. The sharpest-eyed of us will never see another. Possibly the Hudsonians have heard of their smaller brethren's fate (though I don't really consider this so very likely), and have taken the lesson to heart. May their shyness double itself, say I. If it does, we have only to buy stronger field-glasses. And the game will be worth it.

Both species of North American turnstones, the ruddy and the black, may be found hunting up and down the beach in the course of their too infrequent semiannual visits, and a pleasing show they make of it. I was highly favored only the other day by a flock of four blacks, birds which summer in the far north, and in September wend their way southward.

As soon as I discovered them, at pretty long range, I set about a more or less cautious approach, somewhat hasty at first, but at a slackened pace as I drew nearer, till at last I barely moved. They paid no heed, and presently I perceived that I had no occasion to go farther, as they were traveling in my direction. I stood stock-still, therefore, and soon they had come as near as I could have desired.

They were feeding in three ways. Sometimes they followed the receding breaker, gleaning from the surface, as it seemed, such edibles as it had washed in. Mostly, however, they busied themselves upon the wet sand just above the last reach of the falling tide.

Once they found a place where the shrimps or prawns were evidently more plentiful than elsewhere, and it was amusing to see how eagerly they worked, each determined to get its full share of the plunder; like children — as memory called up the picture — who, after a forenoon of disappointments, have come upon a patch of thickly covered berry-bushes. Thrusting their short, stout bills into the sand, they drew out their squirming prey, dropped it on the sand, picked it up and shook it, and dropped it again, till finally they had it in condition for swallowing. These manœuvres they repeated, all in desperate competitive haste, till the beach within a circle a few feet in circumference was thickly dotted with minute hillocks of sand, such as I should never have attributed to the work of any bird, had it not been done before my eyes. Then the supply seemed to be exhausted, and — like the huckleberry-pickers — they moved on in search of another bonanza.

At other times they resorted to patches of seaweed lying here and there a little higher on the beach, turning them bottom side up, or brushing them aside, to feast on such small game as had taken shelter underneath. Their action here was like that of a dog when he buries a bone by pushing the earth over it with his nose. They lowered their heads, and with more or less effort according to circumstances accomplished their purpose.

If the obstacle proved too heavy to be moved in this manner, they drew back a little and made a run at it, as men do before a jump or in using a battering-ram. More than once I saw them gain the needed momentum by this means, and much I enjoyed the sight of their ingenuity. If they were not making use of tools, they were coming within an inch of it.

They quarreled now and then over the business, and once two of them faced each other, bill to bill, like game-cocks, a most unusual proceeding among waders, firing off little fusillades of exclamations meanwhile. It is hard for animals of any kind, boys, dogs, roosters, or what-not, to carry on a fight in silence. The tongue must have its part in the contention. The turnstones' disagreements were of the briefest, however, slight ebullitions of temper rather than any actual belligerency.

Once one of them squatted flat on the sand for a spell, an attitude which looked a thousand times more restful than standing on one leg. A sensible bird, I called him. Rather more sensible, perhaps, than a little green-backed crab that just then, or shortly after, sidled under the shank of my boot for shelter when I prodded him gently with a stick. Again and again he repeated this masterly stroke of strategy, about as clever, I dare say, as many of our human attempts at concealment are likely to appear in the eyes of any higher intelligences that may be looking on.

All in all, the turnstones must have made a substantial meal while I watched them. But, whether they did or not, they gave me a pleasant half-hour. I felt at its conclusion as a man does after a peculiarly agreeable neighborly call. My spirit was refreshed. Good luck, say I, to all turnstones. May theirs be always a full table. I wish men did not find it amusing to kill them; but, alas! men will be men, and savagery, filtering down from long lines of barbarous, skin-clad ancestors, is slow in dying.

Our faithful Santa Barbara fellow citizen, the great blue heron, may be seen any day standing motionless, a tall, gaunt, solitary figure, out on the kelp, half a mile or so from land; but I have only once in a long while detected him on the beach. There, knee-deep in the surf, leaning seaward, he is the very picture of fisherman's patience and slow luck. My own patience has never lasted long enough to see him catch anything.

At the opposite extreme of size are the little snowy plovers, which often join the sanderlings in their merry race with the breakers.

The knot, which is known in books, no doubt correctly, as peculiarly a beach-bird, I have never seen there. The two examples that I have had the unexpected fortune to find in the Santa Barbara neighborhood, both autumnal beauties in lovely clear gray and white, were feeding on muddy flats. One of them (the first one), which I kept my happy eyes on for an hour, was scientifically collected, I regret to say (it was no fault of mine), in the same spot two days later.

The season of 1911 seems to have been an exceptionally prolific one in the knot's local calendar, as, besides the two which came under my notice, I have heard of as many others. It did me good to see them, rare as they are on the Pacific coast. Very quiet and demure they seemed, mindless of everything except their daily bread; but creatures that journey on their own wings — not in flocks, but singly — from northern Ellesmere Land to southern Patagonia and back again every year must be endowed, not only with physical endurance, but with goodly measures of that higher than physical quality which, in people of our own kind, we denominate as courage, or, more expressively, as pluck. Hats off to them, say I.

Twice only in three years I have seen a single Northern phalarope playing the rôle of beach-bird. Simple accidents both occurrences must have been, for at the same time hundreds (and one day a full thousand) were swimming in the shallow pools of the Estero. I say a thousand. There could hardly have been less than that. More than two hundred were counted in one small corner, and the total number was conservatively estimated on that basis. A busy spectacle they offered to any one standing on the railway, their prevailing white color and their intense activity rendering them conspicuous, in spite of their small size, even to passengers in the trains.

Willets are moderately common with us in spring and fall, and should have been mentioned earlier, in connection with the curlews and godwits. They are among the best esteemed of our seashore visitors, but I have learned nothing of consequence about their feeding-habits.

And the same must be said concerning the most unexpected, and by far the most exciting, of all our Santa Barbara waders.

In company with three enthusiastic and widely experienced collectors I had gone to a stretch of unfrequented beach west of the city, and there at the last moment, on a few small tide-washed rocks, which had shown us nothing an hour before, I discovered what — looking at them as they stood directly between me and the sun, with no color discernible — I carelessly took for five turnstones.

The collectors, whose guest I was, were beckoned to (as courtesy demanded), and within five minutes three of the birds were turned into specimens, and proved to be surf-birds! None of my companions had ever seen one before (a live one, I mean); and, as may be imagined, even by a man who has never collected anything more than postage-stamps, or street-car transfers, they returned to the city in high spirits.

My own feelings were naturally of a more subdued and mingled sort. It was a pleasure to add so fine a bird, one of the very few North American species whose breeding-grounds are still unknown, to my local notebook collection, which I could not have done but for the killing; and I sympathized warmly with my companions in their unexpected fortune. ("I never dreamed that I should ever see one," said the youngest of the trio, half to himself, as we drove homeward; and none of them could talk of much else.) But I sympathized at the same time with the poor creatures at the other end of the gun. They had fallen martyrs to science, and their death was painless. Perhaps they had little to complain of.

But I enjoyed an interview with a little flock of their kind far more, and came away from it with a better taste in my mouth, a few years ago, about the rocks on the ocean shore at Pacific Grove, where the deadliest weapon the birds had to face was a too inquisitive field-glass.

There is life yet in the homely old saying, "Let the shoemaker stick to his last." A man who relucts at killing fishes was never born to be a bird-collector.

IN THE ESTERO

MIDSUMMER is out of comparison the dullest part of the year with a Santa Barbara bird-lover. Even the linnets and the meadowlarks have fallen silent after nine or ten months of music. But the story of a morning in early August will show how agreeable an hour one may now and then spend about a tract of city-bounded mud-flats and tide-pools even in a time of relative dearth, a time between times, as we may call it. For an outdoor man who will take what he can get, there is always something provided.

As I left the beach and descended the low railway embankment to the Estero, some large wading-bird (for a wading-bird is recognizable as such by the cut of its jib almost as readily when flying as when on its feet) was approaching at a good height from the opposite direction. It described a circle or two, reconnoitring, and then dropped into the middle of a large open pool so shallow that the black water barely covered its toes.

Once on its legs it straightened itself up, following the general habit of birds in such a case, and again looked about. "Is everything safe here? No enemy in sight?" it might have been asking. Assured upon that point, it began dressing its feathers after its flight, which not unlikely had been a long one, while I, glass in hand, was cautiously drawing near enough to name it; the caution consisting solely of extreme slowness, motion as near to no motion as my native human awkwardness could make it, since the space between us was as level as a billiard-table, and offered not so much as a blade of grass as a means of cover.

To my relief the bird gave no sign of resenting my advances; and a step or two at a time, shuffling along with no unnecessary lifting of the feet, I presently came close enough for my twelve-power glass to make out its points with all needful distinctness. A marbled godwit it proved to be, a migrant that shows itself none too often here, though at San Diego, on the bay shore in winter, I have seen godwits and willets together lining the grassy edge of the flats for a long distance, and so densely massed that I mistook them at first for a border of some kind of herbage. Thousands there must have been; and when they rose at my approach, they made something like a cloud; gray birds and brown birds so contrasted in color as to be discriminated beyond risk of error, even when too far away for the staring white wing-patches of the willets to be longer discernible.

As a flock there was no getting near them; I proved the fact to my dissatisfaction more than once; but sitting quietly on the same bay shore I have repeatedly known a single godwit or willet to feed carelessly past me within the distance of a rod or two.

So much easier is it to come to close quarters with a solitary bird than with a numerous body. Some member of any sizable flock is sure to be of a timid, panic-stricken turn of mind (like the fool who is always ready to cry "Fire!" in a crowded theatre), and, taking alarm, is prompt to communicate the same to its fellows. A distinguished ornithologist (Mr. John H. Bowles) has told me, for example, of knocking over a solitary goose with a stone, though in all probability he could not have stolen within gunshot of a flock of birds of the same kind. It is the *habit* of geese, he assures me, when happened upon singly, to act in this idiotic, incomprehensible manner, as if their intelligence, and even their inherited common sense, sometimes called instinct, were purely a collective affair.

I myself, on the Santa Barbara beach, have more than once found a single goose not quite so *much* of a goose, perhaps, as Mr. Bowles's description would indicate, but readily approachable on the bare sand within a very few rods. One of our baseball pitchers, I am sure, would have bowled him over in a twinkling, and made nothing of it. He was so stupidly tame, indeed, that I considered the possibility of his being a domesticated fowl run loose, a possibility by no means to be ignored in cases of this kind.

I once saw, though I could hardly believe my eyes, a black swan swimming at his ease, perfectly at home, as it seemed, well in the Santa Barbara Channel! *He* was a runaway past question, since there is no wild swan of his color anywhere in North America.

Noble birds the godwits are, nearly the largest of our shore-birds, with beautifully marbled upper parts, and prodigiously long particolored bills slightly uptilted at the tip, perfect tools, no doubt, for the carrying on of their particular line of industry. If, as we are told, a man who is to sup with the devil needs a long spoon (though in such disagreeable company I cannot conceive that the shape or dimensions of one's table utensils would be of much account), a bird which gets its living out of the depths of mud must needs have a long bill.

Whether the two colors of the bill—flesh-color at the base and dusky toward the end — are designed for utility or ornament (or for neither) I hazard no guess. And I may say the same regarding its slight upward inclination, which gives its owner a pleasingly rakish air, especially in certain of its attitudes; when, for instance, it poses on one of its long legs with its neck drawn in and its bill held halfway level, exactly as Audubon pictured it. I once saw one on our beach who looked for all the world as if he had stepped out of the book. "Yes, sir," he might have said, "I am Audubon's bird." And nobody could have denied it.

My bird of yesterday was an exceptionally handsome specimen, or so I thought; decidedly handsome at all events, whether or not he had any actual preëminence in that respect. It was one of those cases, perhaps, where something must be allowed for the play of an excited imagination.

For some minutes he fed quietly; at least, he went through all the appropriate motions, thrusting his bill into the mud again and again. But as an angler may cast by the hour and catch nothing, so we may presume it will sometimes fare with a godwit — if he is equally patient, or equally simple. For some reason, at any rate, this fellow soon took wing again with a succession of raucous cries, and made off beyond the railway seaward, where he speedily became a speck, and then vanished altogether.

"Good-bye, and thank you for small favors," I called after him. There was no one by to smile at my enthusiasm. And even if there had been, why not thank a bird as well as a man or a dog?

His departure, regrettable as it was, did not leave me without plenty of congenial society. The place was alive with smaller birds — Western sandpipers, least sandpipers, snowy plovers (fifty or more), killdeers, and, much the most interesting of all, the others being matters of every day, two kind of phalaropes, one red phalarope — or so I called it, with something short of certainty at the time, and more still in the retrospect — and three of the kind known as Wilson's or the American.

The red one — in autumnal dress, sporting not so much as a single red feather, and suspiciously ahead of its schedule — kept strictly by itself off in one corner, while the three Wilson's flocked together in the midst of the sandpipers. One of them was in gray, as to the upper parts, I mean, the other two in motley, much like the sandpipers, to my ignorant surprise.

All had rather bright yellow legs, a mark of youth, like the mottled wings, and a novel feature to my eye, as I had met with the species hitherto only in spring, when it not only wears a different coat, but has black legs. To dress according to age and season is as much a rule with many birds, especially water-birds, as it is with human kind. If the custom has no other advantage, it at least renders field ornithology a far more intricate and therefore a more interesting study.

In spring, too, there is a more pronounced difference between the sexes, the female phalarope, which is a full size larger than the male, being also, as with human beings, much the more showily attired. It is reported, likewise (at which point, needless to say, the human comparison fails), that she lords it effectually over her mate, throwing upon his shoulders all the burden — no light one — of the household drudgery.

"You are more protectively colored," she is supposed to say to him, "and therefore the eggs and the darling little ones will be safer if you attend to the brooding."

A wise bird, you perceive, is the female phalarope, a very thoughful and affectionate mother. And the male, by all accounts, is so impressed by her reasoning, or so deeply in love, or otherwise of so amiable a temper, that he raises not the least objection.

"Quite right, my dear, quite right, as you always are."

And down he drops upon the eggs, while she gads about — to the Browning Club or where not — at her own good pleasure. A pattern of a spouse, a model *ménage*, and conjugal felicity without a jar! For anything I can see, birds are about as well off as their superiors in matters of this delicate and more or less uncertain nature.

I confess, notwithstanding, that the case of the phalaropes is so extremely exceptional (among birds), that, whenever I have been watching a pair side by side in springtime, I have found myself continually saying "he" of the bigger and brighter one, — an ungallant lapse for which, if I knew how to do it, I would tender her my best apologies.

It has been no slight gratification to find all three species — the entire family, in short, for there is no fourth one the world over — present twice a year on my Santa Barbara stamping-grounds.

Wilson's is the largest and to my taste the most attractive of the three, although, where all are so lovely, the very perfection of daintiness and grace, it is perhaps presumptuous to affect a choice. It is strictly an American bird also (which its patriotic fellow countrymen may take as another consideration in its favor), breeding mostly inland, and comparatively rare on both coasts even in its migrations, which, like others of our North American water-birds, it extends for some, to me unimaginable, reason as far south as Patagonia.

The two other species are summer residents of the arctic and sub-arctic portions of the northern hemisphere in general, eastern and western, and winter nobody knows where, supposedly on the southern oceans.

The commonest one hereabout is the Northern, as it is also the smallest. It is to be hoped that they will be as numerous this season as they were a year ago, and stay with us as long. Then they remained for many weeks, or were many weeks in passing (from August 16 to October 21 by my records), and could be seen almost any day, a dozen or more at once, swimming in small pools close beside the boulevard, where, as they well deserved, they attracted much attention even from the occupants of carriages and automobiles, which went rattling and booming past almost continuously.

At that season, in undress uniform, they are best distinguished from the red phalarope (called also, from its winter dress, the gray phalarope) by their smaller heads and their peculiarly slim necks, which they habitually carry upright at full length, so that, as I have heard more than one person remark, they have much the appearance of miniature swans.

The red phalarope, on the other hand, as I have seen it, is a stouter, bigger-headed, "chunkier"-looking bird, though this last is a point of difference which I was compelled to find out for myself; and, having done so, as I believed, in autumn, I was compelled to wait for its verification till the following spring, when I had unquestioned examples of both species before me in complete nuptial plumage.

Any phalarope, however dressed, may be identified at once by the bill and feet, provided you have the bird in hand; but this, of course, to a consistent "field-glass man" seldom or never happens. And, moreover, what he desires, and what he cannot be satisfied without, is to know his bird whenever he sees it, alive and out of doors. To accomplish this he must exercise all patience and have recourse to all possible expedients; and even then, in the case of species so confusingly alike as these two autumnal phalaropes, he must be contented, for a long time at least, till belief little by little settles into certainty, as luckily it has a way of doing, to list his migrants with an unpleasant degree of questioning.

It is not the worst thing in the world for a man to have a reasonable, or even a slightly unreasonable, measure of confidence in himself; it contributes to the joy of living; but it is a bad sign when he begins to suspect himself of infallibility. Sooner or later he will probably find himself out, or, if he does n't, so much the worst for him.

All phalaropes are remarkably unsuspicious so far as human beings are concerned, as if they had never had occasion to look upon men as more dangerous than so many wolves or oxen. My first acquaintance with the family was with a solitary Wilson's many years ago in the mountains of North Carolina, and I have narrated elsewhere my repeated and all but successful attempts to take it out of the water in my hand.

The first couple of the same species that I saw in Santa Barbara (a lovely pair they were, in their prettiest honeymoon dress) were not quite so tame as that, but charmingly trustful. And my first undoubted Santa Barbara red one allowed me to move so closely about him on the bare sand that finally I could no longer focus my glass upon him, and was compelled to withdraw a few yards for a nicer examination, — to get farther away, that is, in order to get a nearer view, which is what we may call the field-glass paradox. Indeed, I thought the creature must surely be crippled, and was pitying him accordingly, when a dog suddenly ran near, and whiff! away went the bird as lively as a cricket. The next morning, to my intense delight, both he and his splendid high-colored mate were in the same spot, the only *pair* of the kind that I have ever seen together. They flew away together, and let us hope are together still.

Northern phalaropes have resort to a remarkably taking and ingenious device when feeding in shallow water. Seated on the surface, they whirl rapidly round and round like a top or a dancing dervish. I have seen numbers of them thus curiously engaged in a small pool. Two that I noticed a few days ago within a yard of each other were revolving in opposite directions, one from right to left, the other from left to right. It was almost dizzying to look at them. In fact, a fellow observer, by no means a weakling, has assured me that on one occasion the sight actually affected him with nausea, so that he was obliged to turn away his head to recover himself.

Northern phalaropes have this habit, I say. I happen never to have seen either of the two other species indulging in it. But not for a moment will I think of asserting that they never do, lest to-morrow or the day after, to my chagrin, I go out and find them hard at it. I have had mortifying experiences in this line, and hope I have learned wisdom.

Sometimes I have been tempted to imagine that wild creatures amuse themselves by laying up little surprises of one sort and another for our humiliation, so often do we find them doing something wholly unexpected — building a nest in some preposterous situation, breaking out with some absolutely uncharacteristic song, or otherwise conducting themselves in a manner which after years of intimate acquaintance we should have pronounced impossible.

Tell what you have seen, say I; but if you value your self-respect as what is called an observer (a word I have wearied of), beware of negative assertions. Better know less and be sure of it.

As for this clever rotatory method of stirring up the bottom of shallow pools, it is most likely common to phalaropes in general, like the preeminence by them so gallantly accorded to the feminine sex. If this should turn out to be true, I should be in favor of naming them the whirligig family, according to the good old aboriginal custom of descriptive cognomens. "Whirligig birds"; yes, I think that would be excellent — rememberable and expressive.

So far I wrote in the summer of 1911, telling what I had seen; but with the autumn came increase of knowledge. September and October brought thousands of Northern phalaropes, and in November, ten days after the last of these had taken their departure, came a flock of two hundred, more or less, of the so-called red species, — as much to our surprise as to our pleasure, since nothing of the kind had been witnessed during the three previous seasons. Day by day their numbers were augmented till the whole Estero, on both sides of the railroad, was thick with them. Every pool had its quota. And in the matter of whirling they proved to be not a whit behind their Northern relatives. Scores of them could be seen practising the vertiginous game at once. In more senses than one it was a stirring spectacle; and "whirligig birds" seemed more than ever appropriate as a family cognomen.

AN EXCITING FORENOON

IT is with birds as with places and people; some are endeared to us by one quality, and some by a different or even an opposite quality. The phalaropes are trustful. They swim about us almost within hand's reach; we like them for that. Other birds are wary to the last degree; we must match our wits against theirs, or we shall never have them within comfortable *eye*-reach; and we like them for that, and pursue them the harder. And others, a few, are never so highly appreciated as when we gaze at them afar off. Such are the common carrion-eating vultures, turkey-buzzards we call them; almost disgusting near at hand, but miracles of grace as they float in wide circles far above us under the great blue dome.

For me, and I suppose for every one, there is a peculiar satisfaction in coming unexpectedly close upon any shy creature, be it larger or smaller, bird or beast. Thus I recall my sensations a year ago when after standing a long time motionless on the brim of a deep, steeply walled cañon, admiring one of the most beautiful of all our Santa Barbara prospects, I heard something stir just below me, and the next instant saw a wildcat emerge from the chaparral and, oblivious of my proximity, though there was nothing but the air between us, mount a boulder like the one I was myself standing on, and look leisurely about him.

Of the same nature, though less startling, is the satisfaction I take in surprising, or, better still, in being surprised by, some more or less ordinary bird at an extraordinarily near range. And this is what befell me yesterday.

I had been making my daily morning round of the Estero, and, having been rewarded by nothing out of the common run, was turning cityward, when I bethought myself, as a last resort, to look into one other pool, in which I had occasionally found something of interest.

Here, as throughout the Estero, a goodly number of Western sandpipers were feeding, and near them was a comparatively infrequent and therefore better-appreciated visitor, a single yellow-legs, or telltale.

This I saw at a glance was of a medium size, neither one thing nor another, as I expressed it to myself, so that I was uncertain whether to take it for a small example of *melanoleucus* or a large example of *flavipes*, these being two species of the genus *Totanus* which differ only in the matter of size, showing, so far as I have ever heard, no appreciable difference in the way of plumage.

The worst of it was that the longer I studied the fellow, the worse off I found myself. One minute it was large enough for the larger species; the next minute it was small enough for the smaller one, which latter, I must confess in the interest of truth, I was rather desirous of calling it, since that is much the less common of the two on the Pacific coast. As an honest observer, desiring to play fair with myself, I was bound to stand on my guard against being influenced by any such unscientific consideration.

On the other hand, however, I reminded myself that I had been looking for the last hour at hosts of very small sandpipers, and indeed was looking at them now in this very pool; naturally, almost inevitably, therefore, by force of unconscious comparison, (a force that I have often found myself laboring under), this larger bird would strike me as larger than it really was.

Tossed thus, like a shuttlecock, between contrary opinions, I felt increasingly foolish, as a man sensitive about his standing in his own eyes of necessity will in such a predicament, though as a matter of fact I was simply manifesting a commendable spirit of scientific caution. If I had been a younger hand at the business, I could probably have decided the question on the instant. Given a certain measure of inexperience, and certainty is about the easiest thing in the world. Why bother one's head with second thoughts? What a man knows, he knows, and there 's an end on 't. Alas, I have found that too often what a man knows he does n't know; and so with age comes slowness of decision with all its disagreeable concomitants.

At last I determined to hear the bird's voice. That might furnish a clue, though I believed that the two species were practically one in this respect also. In any event, the experiment was worth trying. I stepped briskly forward, therefore, with as much bluster as I could conveniently command on so narrow a stage, expecting the bird as a reasonable being to take alarm and make off, giving voice as it flew.

But even when I had come as near it as I could without wading into the black, muddy water, the long-legged creature simply stalked a little farther out, and, having nodded a few times after its manner, resumed its feeding. "Who 's afraid?" it seemed to say. "You 're only fooling."

Well, a half-minute or so passed; my glance fell upon a narrow mud-bar, say thirty or forty feet from where I stood; and there, directly under my eye, between me and the yellow-legs, in open space, stood a splendid black-bellied plover in elegant plumage, the lower parts from the chin downward jet-black.

Through the field-glass the big fellow was almost in my hand, the second of its kind that I had ever seen in Santa Barbara, and as well as I could remember, the only one I had ever seen anywhere in adult summer dress, the very great majority of autumnal "beetle-heads," as gunners call them, having the lower parts white, and the upper parts largely gray, whence another of their common names, the "gray plover." Indeed, I believe it is true that the birds put on their summer garb so late and take it off so early that specimens in really perfect plumage — which even my bird could not be said to wear — are almost never seen so far south as any part of the United States.

The thing was like a miracle. A moment ago he was not there. I had not seen him arrive, large as he was and so near. I had not moved or turned away my head; there was no cover from behind which he could have stepped into sight; and now there he stood, there on a narrow neck of land, perfectly secure, had he but known it, but by no means insensible. His bearing and action proved conclusively that he had just alighted.

However, this was but half the story. The *real* miracle was yet to come.

From the first instant the plover was evidently much disturbed in his mind. Most likely he had never before found himself so closely cornered. I think he was as much surprised to see me as I was to see him. As he came over the Estero, his eyes probably fell upon the yellow-legs and small sandpipers feeding so quietly. "This is a promising place," he said to himself; "suppose I drop in." And behold, as his feet touched the mud, here, standing over him, was this terrible monster.

Nevertheless, with all his wavering he held his ground for a few moments, long enough for me to scan him again and again from bill to tail. Then, "This will never do," he thought; "high time I was going"; and away he went, sounding that resonant musical whistle, so very sweet, alas! in the ears of all the large and honorable tribe of shore-bird destroyers; for this "beetle-head," the prince of plovers, breeding on the arctic shores of both continents, wanders at one time and another over nearly the whole earth, and wherever he goes, or wherever men are sufficiently civilized to enjoy such refined, gentle-manly amusement, he is treated as a target. He does well to be wary, the warier the better. I could wish that he would never allow a man to come within a mile. So magnificent and innocent a creature to be massacred for sport!

For a minute, possibly, my attention was fastened upon the flying bird and his voice as he dwindled out of sight. Then my eyes again rested by chance upon the bar of mud — perhaps two rods in length and a foot or two wide — whence he had flown, and behold, a second wonder! There stood another bird of pretty much the same dimensions and general color, but of a darker shade, and plainly not a plover.

For the second time within five minutes I was struck with amazement. By what magic had the bird got there, and, far more important, what in the name of ornithology was I to call him?

His black bill was rather stout and somewhat longer than the plover's, yet still of only middling length for a shore-bird of his size. Evidently he did not probe mud for a livelihood. His fore neck and upper breast were jet-black, curiously divided ("curvingly divided" my pencil put it, with greater exactness) as it ran down upon the white breast; and his legs were of a bright orange!

To my eye he was utterly strange. He had somewhat the look and build of an oyster-catcher, I said to myself, though the bill was not long enough nor stout enough, nor the bird himself large enough. Certainly he was neither of the oyster-catchers that I knew.

But there was a third one, Frazar's by name, rare and not rightfully falling within our limits, a bird that I had never seen, and had never expected to see, and of which I remembered not a word of description. Could the bird before me be by any possibility of that species? On all accounts this was most unlikely, or better to say, impossible. But if he was not an oyster-catcher, what could he be?

In plain words, I was at my wits' end. The one thing I was sure of was that here was something the like of which I had never set eyes on till this minute.

Like the plover he stayed a brief while, extremely restless, too, like the plover, as he had abundant reason to be; and then, as soon as he could pull himself together, it seemed, off he went, with harsh cries not in the least resembling the plover's smooth, melodious whistle.

What would turn up next on the few square feet of that prolific mud-bar, out of which birds seemed actually to be born for my delectation and puzzlement? A flamingo, perhaps.

But when I had waited long enough, and the age of miracles seemed to be for the time being past, I took my way homeward, pondering over what I had seen.

Once there, I had recourse to the Handbook. My first turn of the leaves was to Frazar's oyster-catcher. Nothing fitted. I knew it would be so, I protested to myself. The idea was absurd. For one thing, no oyster-catcher would ever be found in so unlikely a place.

But on the margin of the same leaf (so near a shot had I made) under a description of the ruddy turnstone I saw written in my own hand, supplying the book's too frequent lack, "Legs bright orange-red." "Here we have it," said I; and on reading the account of that bird's juvenile plumage I found my stranger faithfully portrayed.

I had never seen a ruddy turnstone before without more or less of those conspicuous, highly distinctive, irregularly disposed reddish patches which give the wearer so odd, almost clownish, an appearance, as they give it also sundry of its popular names, — "calico-back," "checkered snipe," and "ruddy turnstone."

I had clean forgotten those bright-colored legs ("red-legged plover" is another of the names it is said to go by), an excusable lapse, I try to persuade myself, since I had seen only two such birds (unusual on the Pacific coast, where the black turnstone mostly replaces them) in more than twenty years.

After all, as I consider the matter, I see no great reason to lament this bit of forgetfulness. It furnished me with an hour or two of pleasurable excitement, a thorough waking-up, of a sort not to be enjoyed every day by any means at my time of life.

But I still ask myself, "How in the world did those birds land, one after the other, at my very feet unobserved?" I cannot believe that they sprang into being there and then, new-made like Adam out of the dust of the earth, a pitch of faith that St. Francis, holy man and greater brother of the birds, would have experienced no difficulty in exercising.

Perhaps it would be enough to say, though such an explanation may sound ludicrously simple after all the talk I have made about it, that they happened to drop in while my eyes were unconsciously directed elsewhere. It is a common saying among wise men, though little in favor with the vulgar, that the simplest explanation is apt to be the truest.

My morning's adventure brought to mind an incident in no wise connected with ornithology. Many years ago I was present with a small company of friends who had assembled to hear one of the most widely known of American novelists read a play which she had recently completed and was hoping to have presented upon the stage. She read it well, with no attempt at that tiresome "accomplishment" known as "elocution"; we were all deeply interested; and at the close there was a general chorus of praise and hearty congratulation.

But a journalist and critic of long experience entered one slight objection. If the play was to be acted, there must be a change in the opening scene. "As the scene stands," he said, "the heroine is on the stage with others when the curtain rises. That will never do. The heroine must have an entrance."

That last remark was what my morning's adventure called to mind. My two birds would have missed nine parts of their dramatic effect if, like the yellowlegs, they had been on the stage when the curtain rose.

They had an entrance, and I had the excitement and the wonder of it. I think nothing more like wizardry ever happened to me than the appearance of that turnstone, a very sizable, sturdily built body, it must be remembered, standing at my feet where but an instant before there had been nothing.

And after this I think I shall not forget in a hurry that the ruddy turnstone's legs are of a bright orange color. That bit of knowledge, I flatter myself, is for one while burned in.

A LONG PROCESSION

PELAGIC birds, properly so called, seldom favor the neighborhood of the beach with their presence. If a solitary fulmar swims within the range of a field-glass, it is by accident rather than design. So I infer, at least, from the extreme rarity of the occurrence. And yet, when such an event does happen, the stranger, if you keep it in sight long enough, may not unlikely pass directly under your feet as you stand on the pier. If it stays mostly out of sight of land, it is not because anything on shore frightens it. It was made to live at sea, though it was hatched on land, just as the toad, its poor relation, is made to live on land, though it is hatched in the water.

There is one genus of oceanic birds, however, that in the right season may be seen, and that not so very infrequently, streaming past by thousands, an innumerable host, moving in one continuous procession, up the coast or down the coast, as things may happen. And an exhilarating sight it is; although, unless your vision carries farther than mine, you must generally have a field-glass through which to view it. Sometimes the route of the birds lies within the whistling buoy (about a mile and a half from the beach, I am told); oftener, I think, outside of it.

They are recognizable by their shape and, better still, by the manner of their flight. For the most part, they seem not to be migrating, though in habit they are migratory, but rather hastening toward some rendezvous, presumably some fishing-ground, some spot in the ocean where a school of sardines is at this moment swimming. To-day they are going in one direction, and to-morrow, perhaps, they will be going in the opposite direction. But, whichever way they are headed, they move in a body, straight on and on and on (like Columbus in the poem) in an unvarying line, as if they were following a leader and he were following a trail.

As for possible minor marks of identification, you are never near enough to discover whether they have any. All the birds are dark on the upper side; some are dark all over except for a silvery lining of the wings, while others are light-colored not only on the under side of the wings, but on the lower parts of the body as well. One great difficulty under which the man on shore labors is that they invariably fly low, almost grazing the surface of the water.

Their flight, swift as it is, swifter by far than the wind, as the wind's habit is in quiet Santa

Barbara, may be described as slightly undulatory or wavering; that is to say, they are continually rising and falling (this explains how you come to see the lining of the wings), suiting themselves to the action of the waves, just out of the reach of which they are keeping. In other words, by incessant balancing or tilting they seem to be trying, as pelicans often are, to see how closely they can follow the crest of the wave without being struck by it; from which fact it follows that they are continually falling momentarily out of sight in the trough of the sea.

As I have observed them at Santa Barbara (for which purpose, as soon as I discover what is going on, I hasten out to the end of the long pier), they maintain, as I have said, a straight course, never veering to left or right, so far as appears at the observer's distance, and never stopping to feed — a strict case, as it looks, of holding the rudder true and steering for a star.

Long, sharp wings, short necks and tails, a general appearance of "stockiness," — so much you readily determine as they hurry along, a wavering dark line, always at top speed. The wonder is that they are so many and so completely of one mind.

My first sight of them was at Monterey, or rather from the adjacent peninsula of Pacific

Grove. One cold, comfortless afternoon (May 28), with a gale blowing the dust about, I clambered out over the big rocks ("Lovers' Point," I have heard the place called), seeking a sheltered nook from which to enjoy the tremendous surf; and, having settled myself to my satisfaction, I raised the field-glass to look at a passing gull, or some such commonplace object, when, behold! out there in the bay, beyond the scope of unassisted eyesight, there were millions of birds (so they looked), the water and the air immediately above it swarming with them. And such a commotion as they were in, they and the raging waters! Such swiftness of flight, such splashing and dashing!

I was some minutes in shaking myself together. Then I said, "Shearwaters!"

I had only read of them. I had never so much as hoped to see them; but here they were in life. And *such* life! They did not plunge from aloft like gannets, or brown pelicans, or most terns. The highest of them could scarcely be said to be up in the air at all. They skimmed the surface of the water, and, as it were, dashed into the white-capped waves on a level. Shearwaters in all literalness. Between their intense and multitudinous activity and the extraordinary tumult of the water there is no beginning to describe the animation, the madness, the wild fury and riot of the scene.

The next day it was the same story continued; and by this time, having consulted my only authority, I was ready to say (in my note-book): "I should think there must be two or three species, but, of course, it is all guesswork with me. The birds are too distant, and fly too fast."

On the first day of June I made another entry: "The show is still on. And this afternoon the birds came nearer the shore. The greater part, I think, are dark all over except for the silvery lining of the wings. Others have light under parts, while above they are dark. The all-dark ones look amazingly like huge, overgrown swifts—the wings so long, narrow, and sharp, and the bodies (perhaps) bobbin-shaped."

The next afternoon I was again on the rocks. The same riotous scene! The same incalculable numbers! "Also," the pencil writes, "I noted one dark bird with a white head, flying very fast." I still wonder what that could have been,—one of the fulmars not improbably.) Flocks, too, of what appeared to be small white birds were continually flying across my field of vision, all following one course. Sandpipers or plovers I supposed them to be; but two days later, as will appear, I found reason to revise my opinion.

In the forenoon of that day (June 4) I took in the show from Lighthouse Point, — the end of Point Pinos, — a much more favorable station, as the birds passed at shorter range. "More than ever this morning, a countless host, the bodies all dark," says the notebook.

Four hours afterward they were still pouring into the bay, past the same point, in an uninterrupted stream; and I made an effort, watch in hand, to count them — about two hundred a minute. Two hours later yet they were still flying, but now in so dense a mass that it was impossible to be anything like exact in my enumeration, though I did my best — "three or four hundred to the minute."

For six hours, and there is no telling for how much longer, they passed at this rate, all in one direction, toward the inner bay. Were they going there to fish, I wondered, or were they bound farther, up or down the coast? But I could only say that, left and right, as far as the field-glass carried, the procession was always approaching and disappearing.

Some time later I returned to Lovers' Point, where the notebook indicates plainly enough my bewildered state of mind.

"The larger part of the birds are in the water; but the noticeable feature of the case is that a good proportion of them show the light under parts, while of those that have been streaming all day past the lighthouse, perhaps a mile from here, not one in a thousand showed otherwise than dark. Was that host quite distinct from this? And, if so, where has it gone? But perhaps it is here, after all, for now I discover myriads of black-bodied birds in the air in a fairly close flock. And now a fishing-boat, one of a hundred or two in the offing, ploughs through the bedded flock, and they rise in a cloud." But even now, in these startling conditions, they never rise high, the pencil is scrupulous to add.

It is practically certain, as I now consider, that there were two or more species in the bay, the dark-bodied, so called, and the black-vented (these two pretty surely), and probably the pink-footed.

But think of the numbers! For six hours, and, for anything I can say, for an indefinitely longer period, they passed Lighthouse Point at a probable average rate of three hundred to the minute; three hundred and sixty minutes at three hundred to the minute, more than one hundred thousand birds! And who could guess how many thousands of another kind were at the same moment resting in the bay?

As against this enormous estimate, however, it is to be said that the flock, as some have imagined to be true in such cases (though nobody has proved it, so far as I heard), may have been moving in a wide circle, — a circle so very wide that its visible arc at a little distance had all the appearance of a straight line, so that the same birds, quartering the sea in search of prey, may have passed my station more than once in the six hours. But, figure the affair as you will, the number remains sufficiently amazing.

At Lighthouse Point, by the by, I discovered that my "small white birds" were neither sandpipers nor plovers, but phalaropes. A dozen or so were feeding in a pool of fresh water at my back, and great numbers could be seen resting upon the ocean a little offshore, while now and then a bird would pass from one group to the other. When you see a flock of small sandpipers swimming, you may know they are not sandpipers.

And it occurs to me as I write that while I stood there listening to the thunders of the surf and gazing upon this interminable line of shearwaters, I saw all unexpectedly, for the first and only time, one of the most showily decorated of all water-birds, a tufted puffin. The wonderful creature flew past me, close in, pushing before him that prodigiously large and brilliantly colored triangular red bill; a bill designed for ornament rather than use, one would say, to look at it, awkward in size and awkward in shape, but by all accounts a powerful weapon, capable of inflicting a painful wound upon the hand that intrudes into its burrow, cutting to the bone and tightening its grip till the jaws are pried apart or the bird is killed.

The sight of that one superb creature, transient as it was, would have been enough of itself to make this fourth day of June a day memorable in the life of a landlubberly ornithological enthusiast. All the pigments of all the painters in the world could not have yielded a brighter red than that puffin, hatched in a noisome dark burrow and living at sea, had managed somehow to secure, along with a pair of most elegant flowing pale-yellow plumes, as a nuptial decoration.

Marvelous things in the way of color has old Mother Earth hidden away from human observation. It ought to be evident to the dullest and proudest among us (for none but the dull are likely to be very proud) that the beauties of the world were not made exclusively for man's appreciation. We are not the only ones with eyes and ears, though it may be true, as we fondly assure ourselves, hard-pushed as we might be to prove it, that we stand at the top of things.

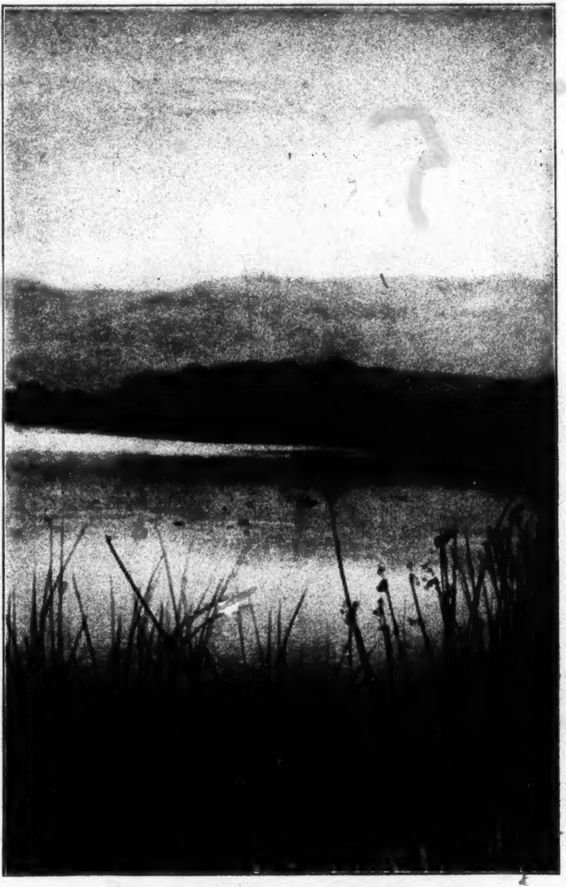
But the shearwaters! They were the wonder of the day, after all. How strange a life they lead! A whole nation moving up and down the world in a body, skimming the face of the trackless waters, seeking their prey, which also wanders hither and thither in a body, millions swimming as one. Above the water and beneath the water it is gregariousness beyond that of the Goths and Huns.

A VISITATION OF SWANS

I HAD never seen a wild swan till the twenty-second of December, 1908. That morning I walked out, as I was in the habit of doing every few days, to Laguna Blanca, the only body of fresh water in the neighborhood of Santa Barbara; an artificial lake, at least in its present size and condition, though an old Spanish resident of the city tells me there was always water there. Shooting is prohibited by its owners, and throughout the winter, under this privilege of sanctuary, the lake is frequented by many kinds of water-fowl.

On this particular morning, as I drew near, expecting to find the usual assortment of ducks, coots, and grebes, with gulls, perhaps, and two or three cormorants, I was startled by the sight of a single large white bird, — out of comparison larger than any of these, — which a second glance showed to be, of all things alive, a swan.

I advanced toward it at a snail's pace, standing still after every step (the wonderful stranger must not be disturbed if any possible degree of caution could prevent it), and presently a flock of seven — my one bird included — came swimming shore-



LAGUNA BLANCA, WITH WATER-FOWL

ward from behind a dense clump of tall tules. I took them in with all eagerness, not knowing how soon they might become alarmed and make off, and soon had them in an excellent light and at a comfortably short range. Seven wild swans! And close by! What a vision! If the heavens had opened, I could hardly have been more surprised.

Then a horseman rode past, while I held my breath and wished him elsewhere; but instead of taking flight the magnificent birds simply wheeled about and swam to the middle of the lake, where they came to rest, and at once tucked their heads under their wings. I rejoiced to see them so perfectly at home. Who could tell but they might be proposing to pass the season with us?

After feasting my eyes upon them sufficiently for the nonce, I proceeded with my walk, and three hours later, on my return, came again in sight of the lake. At that moment the swans were headed straight toward me with the apparent intention of coming ashore. Catching sight of a man, however, they wheeled about, and after a little hesitation made for the opposite bank. There they busied themselves with dressing their feathers till something startled into flight a multitude of ducks and coots. At this the swans lifted their heads, and after looking suspiciously around (such a commotion should mean *something*, they considered) sailed into the middle of the lake, reminding me by their stately movement, one behind another in a kind of formal order, of the day not long before when a line of sixteen white battle-ships had steamed into Santa Barbara channel. To my ornithological mind, in its present excited state, one procession seemed scarcely more impressive than the other.

The following day was spent among the hills behind the city, and at the height of land on the steep, winding trail from Mission Cañon over into San Roque Cañon I stopped to breathe and look about me. Laguna Blanca, far below and some miles away, shone as one of the fairest objects in the landscape, and it occurred to me to level the field-glass upon it to see whether by any possibility the swans could be distinguished at that distance. Sure enough, they were distinctly visible, grouped in the middle of the lake, which otherwise, for aught the glass could tell me, might have been entirely deserted, though it was certain that hundreds if not thousands of coots and ducks were resting upon its surface. For showing from afar there is no color to dispute with white.

As I neared the lake the next morning — how could I keep away? — the swans seemed to be absent; but before many minutes I came upon them close inshore in a little bay, surrounded by hundreds of ducks and coots, the coots, most loquacious bodies, engaged as usual in an animated conversation.

I drew nearer and nearer, desirous of improving so favorable an opportunity to make sure whether the swans had a small yellowish patch in the loral region (between the eye and the base of the upper mandible), an inconspicuous mark, the presence or absence of which would determine the specific identity of the birds, whether whistling or trumpeter swans. Before I could satisfy myself upon this nice point, however, the smaller birds took the alarm; and, their noisy, hurried flight, with so much dragging of the feet, proving too much for the swans, they sailed away to their one place of safety, where they immediately tucked their heads under their wings for a forenoon nap.

Half an hour later, while I was spying upon a strange-looking fox sparrow scratching about the roots of the tules, one of the swans sent up a shout, and in another moment a big white bird (and big enough he looked) came slanting down from the sky, and splashed into the water. The one that had sounded the signal swam at once to meet him, and the two gesticulated in each other's faces as if inclined to quarrel, I thought. Probably I misinterpreted their movements, for the newcomer at once joined the others; and now there were eight in the group, every one with his head behind his wing.

If the coots were chatterboxes, their tongues always wagging, jabbering to themselves if no one else was by, the swans, I had by this time concluded, were fairly to be called sleepyheads. A very somnolent set they seemed to be, surely. "Now, then," they were always ready to say, "as long as that inquisitive old body won't allow us to feed alongshore, why not go to sleep again?" In that deep water there was really little else for them to do, I suppose, unless they should first acquire the impossible art of diving.

Some time later they woke up, and had a fit of calling. I looked into the sky, anticipating a further arrival; but nothing came of it. Had the birds been deceived, or had the passers aloft declined the invitation?

One thing I am bound to admit. It was proved to me more than once. For detecting the presence of birds of their own kind overhead they had some means, whether of sight or hearing, that lay quite beyond the scope of my senses.

But, indeed, I have often remarked how surprisingly quick certain kinds of birds are to notice what goes on above their level. A flock of curlews, for example, feeding, heads down, upon the sand, will discover you instantly on the edge of a cliff overlooking the beach, say at an elevation of fifty feet, and be off on the wing almost before you know it, no matter how slow and noiseless your approach may have been; whereas, had you been walking on the beach itself, in full sight, the chances are that they would have suffered you to come moderately close upon them without betraying any marked uneasiness. It has become a habit with them, apparently, to keep a sharp lookout upward, perhaps because their more usual enemies come from that quarter.

This, however, can hardly be true of swans, whose principal apprehensions, I should think, must be of rapacious quadrupeds. As for their superior sight or hearing, there is no sort of bird, we may safely say, but excels us in some respect, clever as we think ourselves. The Powers above have not put everything of the best into any one basket. Every creature has its own particular endowment, and presumably, living for itself, regards itself as the sum and centre of all things. Mankind, if we may guess, holds no monopoly, even of self-conceit.

On my return at noon, — for I commonly went two miles or so beyond the lake to the ocean beach, — I found the swans in a bay or cove, feeding so industriously (no sign of drowsiness now) that they permitted me to draw near enough to see plainly the small loral patch before mentioned. It was as good as a visiting-card. Henceforth I was in possession of their full name, *Olor columbianus*, the whistling swan.

As they fed, holding their heads under water for a surprisingly long time, a number of ducks collected in the vicinity, diving directly beside them, almost or quite under them, in fact, as if — what I doubted not was true — the long-necked creatures were stirring up the muddy bottom with a thoroughness which the ducks found highly to their advantage. "Strange," says the note-book, "how exceedingly small the ducks, even the canvasbacks, look. As for the ruddies and buffleheads, they look for all the world like ducklings following their mothers about." The swans made not the least objection to the ducks' persistent and rather meddlesome looking activities ("Help yourselves, children, help yourselves," they might have been saying), but now and then they indulged in what seemed like slight fallings-out among themselves.

When they had fed thus for some time, they proceeded to bathe: after dinner the finger-bowl. And a lively performance it was, with a deal of noisy splashing as they threw themselves heavily and rather clumsily first on one side and then on the other. "They are bound to make a clean job of it," writes the pencil. One of the adults (known for such by his clear white head) made a particularly brave show in drying himself, stretching up to his full height, and shaking his wings and tail in a most vigorous manner.

"In calling," my note-book records, — though I fail to remember the pertinency of the remark in this immediate connection, — "they hold the head straight up, and then at the moment of utterance raise it a little higher still with a sudden jerk. Their *loud* calls sound human."

I spent the better part of an hour watching their various activities. Then, as I passed a trifle too near, they swam out into the lake, from the middle of which three of them suddenly took wing, for no apparent reason, rising to a considerable height and flying off toward the golf-grounds, as if they were bound away for good. The others declined to follow their lead, however, and after a bit the seceders returned, flew across the sky directly before me, their necks stretched out to the full (looking almost ridiculously slender), and dropped again into the lake.

Here was the very thing I had been wishing to see — swans in flight. And I had seen it to capital advantage, and still had the birds with me. A lucky fellow, I called myself.

This was on the 24th of December. Three days later I was fated to witness a far more spectacular display of flight with no such happy termination.

But meantime, on Christmas morning, it pleased me to hear a friend remark, quite independently of any suggestion of mine, how wonderfully like a fleet of war-vessels the swans looked as they sailed slowly away from us in a majestic, well-spaced line. The comparison, I saw, had not been due to my overheated imagination. And, while we were admiring their stately manœuvres, one of them suddenly lifted up his voice, and in response to the call two birds dropped out of the sky, a sight to stir the blood of a man who was beholding wild swans for the first time in his life.

Well, two days afterward, as I just now began to say, I was at the lakeside again, and was disappointed to find the flock reduced by more than half — four birds instead of ten. But I need not have fretted, for this was to be by much my most interesting day. Within half an hour, one thing after another having detained me, I heard a volley of loud trumpetings over head, quickly answered from below; and looking up I beheld a wonderful, never-to-be-forgotten sight, a flock of snow-white swans (twenty-four in number, as the count showed) already scaling downward, headed for the lake. Down they came, little by little, wings sharply set, necks curved upward and backward, by way of slackening the descent, as I judged, and the big black feet sprawling out in front, ready for the water. Four of the birds took it at once, but the rest acted as if they would go farther. Then the eight swimmers set up an appealing chorus: "Come in! O come in!" whereupon the twenty turned, and in half a minute or less the twenty-eight birds were all in the water in a close bunch.

For a little while there was a great commotion ("a great hullabaloo" the note-book has it, a pencil being always under less restraint in its use of the vernacular than a pen quite ventures to be), but in a few minutes everything was quiet again, and every bird's head hidden under its wing. Half an hour later three others were toled down into the sleeping circle.

"O rest ye, brother mariners; we will not wander more."

And now we had thirty-one! It was fortune to turn a man's head; but, as it seemed, it was too good to last.

Within ten minutes two men, who had secured a license to fish in the lake, pushed out a boat; and instantly the air swarmed with ducks, a thousand or two, and in another moment the swans gave cry, and soon every bird of them was on the wing.

Would they turn and light again? No, this time they were thoroughly frightened; and in a long line, not in Indian file, as they commonly moved when swimming, but side by side, they rose over the low, rounded, grassy hill opposite me (a sight surpassing all imagination, the sun shining full on all those snow-white wings), and in a few seconds were out of sight. The lake, which had been covered with birds a minute or two before, was now, except for a few hundred coots, all but deserted.

Needless to say what my feelings were toward those miserable fishermen, who trolled heedlessly along the shore, and to my heartfelt delight caught nothing.

The one pleasant feature of the case was that the superintendent of the ranch shared my sentiments to the full, and declared that no more fishing-permits should be granted to anybody as long as the bird season lasted. Indeed, the swans had been one of the chief attractions of the place, the more so as no one could remember having seen them there before.

How general the interest in the matter had become was to be shown me amusingly two days afterward. I had gone home dejected, and yet elated. I had witnessed a far more beautiful flight of birds than I had ever dreamed of (a flight of angels could hardly have surpassed it in my imagination), but now all was over. So I thought. But two mornings later, as I was trudging out to the ranch over a muddy road, a man whom I did not recognize leaned out of his buggy as we met, and shouted after me, "The swans have come back." And so they had, but five instead of thirty-one.

"I am hanging about," I wrote in my notebook an hour afterward, "to see if more will be called down. The swans are growing tame. They no longer retreat to the middle of the lake every time the ducks raise an alarm. Two are now in their usual cove fast asleep on one leg in a few inches of water, while the others are exploring the shore in front of the engine-house. A casual passer-by would take them for domesticated birds without a second look."

Not to prolong the story, be it said that the swans remained in varying numbers (from two to twelve being always present) until January 29. Their stay had covered almost five weeks. Then the last of them started, we may suppose, on their long journey towards those far-away northern regions to which so large a proportion of our water-birds betake themselves as spring returns. There, for aught I know, our sleepyheads may have contracted their habit of midday somnolence; for so long as they are there, I suppose, the sun never once goes down.

The next season a single swan made its appearance at the lake on December 4, and remained all by himself in perfect contentment, as far as any of us could judge, till January 4. In that time he had seemed to become almost a part of the place, and the men in charge, who fed him from the first, began to look upon him as settled with them for life. But either he fell a a victim to some fox or coyote, a not unlikely fate, or he heard a call, inward or outward, which he could not resist, and we saw him no more. Since then, to the best of my knowledge, no swan has been seen in Laguna Blanca.

MY FIRST CONDOR

NO ornithologist, of whatever grade, ever came to California without hopes of seeing the great California vulture, otherwise known as the condor. It is worth seeing because it is the largest bird in North America, not to say the world, and because, if not rare, it is at least rarely met with. We all love to do what our neighbors and rivals have never succeeded in accomplishing. Difficulty and scarcity go far to set the price in all markets.

So it was that from the day I reached the Pacific coast I kept my eyes wide open for a condor. I knew, of course, from reading, that it was supposed to be found only among the higher mountains; but then, I said to myself, for a creature with wings high mountains are never far away hereabout, and the bird might by some chance be passing overhead almost anywhere.[1] If he were at all like other Westerners, I reasoned, he could n't be contented to stay in the same place very long at once; and anyhow, there could be no harm in now and then casting a glance heavenward.

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[1] Three times, since this sketch was written, I have seen (at Santa Barbara) a condor near sea-level, but mountains were always within a few miles.

After three weeks at San Diego (and a pleasant three weeks they were, in a world as new as Eden was to Adam), I made a trip to Witch Creek, a hamlet among the mountains, advised to that course by a famous local ornithologist. He promised me no condor; I think the matter was not mentioned between us; but he assured me that I should find a totally different set of birds there from what I had been seeing at San Diego. The expression proved to be a shade (a rather dark shade) too strong; the weather, too, was of the worst and the housing bad; but I found a few new things, and, what with the beauty of the mountains and the mountain valleys, — and the magnificent oaks, — I felt (after I got away) amply repaid for my time and labor.

In such a place it seemed in order to look skyward more frequently than ever; but a professional bird-collector, who for several years had knocked about this Western world in the pursuit of his interesting, but, I should think, rather disagreeable, calling (I was glad to hear him say that no matter how badly he wanted a bird, he could never shoot it if it struck up to sing), when I mentioned my great desire to see a condor, responded, "Oh, doubtless; I should like to see one myself." Dear me! I thought, is it so bad as that? You might as well be looking for the dodo, his tone seemed to imply. But anon hope sprang up again. Such birds there are, I said to myself, and men have seen them. And why not I? So I continued to look heavenward. But the result justified the collector's word. A good man he was, a Boston man, and did me many a favor. Probably the mountains were not sufficiently high and inaccessible to suit the condor's purpose.

Then I returned to San Diego, and moved northward to Pasadena. Here, if anywhere, my desire might possibly be gratified. My window looked into the Sierra Madre Mountains; Mount Lowe, some six thousand feet high, was the nearest of them; I would go to its top and gaze about me.

So said, so done. The way was made easy. A street-car took me from the hotel door to Rubio Cañon; thence a cable-car lifted me almost straight upward to the top of Echo Mountain, so called, a spur of Mount Lowe, and there an ordinary open trolley-car was waiting to convey me to the Alpine Tavern, at the foot of the mountain cone. A marvelous ride that was in the trolley-car, over a road hung against the precipitous side of the mountain, with numberless sharp curves and crazy bridges, while I from my end seat (which, for some reason, there was no need to scramble for) looked down, down, down into the ravines below.

A mile or two before reaching the tavern the road ran into a forest of spruces — the big-cone spruce, I was told afterward. A promising wood for woodpeckers, thought I; and, when the car stopped, I started instantly for the summit. I wished to be first on the trail for the sake of the birds — woodpeckers or what-not — that any one who should precede me might frighten out of sight.

I need not have hurried myself. There were no birds to be frightened: a few California jays, by this time an old story; one or two plain titmice; and perhaps two or three other things (spurred towhees, as I now remember); and even these not in the spruce woods or the oaks, but about the open summit, where it was plain they had grown accustomed to regale themselves on picnickers' leavings. As for the condor, I looked and looked, but might have been in the mountains of New Hampshire for all the good that came of it. On the way down, to be sure, a large bird was seen soaring high in air; but, as well as I could make out, it was only a golden eagle.

A GORGE IN THE SIDE OF MOUNT LOWE

One or two evenings after this the Pasadena ornithologist (there are many worthy of the name, I dare say, but I mean *the* one) called to see me, and I told him of my disappointment.

"What! You have been up Mount Lowe already?" he exclaimed, as much as to say, "Well, well, you don't let the grass grow under your feet, do you?"

Then he expressed surprise that I had missed the condor. That was a new and welcome note, the very first syllable of encouragement that I had heard under this head since setting foot in California; and I determined straightway, though I said nothing, to have that trip over again.

Five days passed; for, though the condor is the largest bird in California, he is by no means the only one. Then, on the last day of January, I was again trudging up the cone of Mount Lowe, when suddenly, as I faced about and looked upward for the hundredth time, there was my bird sailing through the air. It was he, the condor himself; for on the instant, even before I had time to put my glass upon him, I saw the unmistakable marks, the snow-white lower wing-coverts and the yellow head and neck. Far, far up he was, moving in a straight course, with wings set.

I looked, and looked, and looked again; and then, unable to contain myself, I turned to a lady and gentleman who were following me up the trail.

"There!" said I, "if you wish to see the largest bird in North America, there he is."

They were not half so much excited as I thought they ought to be.

"It is n't larger than an eagle, is it?" said the gentleman, after inquiring its name.

He had seen a bald eagle at Catalina Island a day or two before, and seemed to have gathered that, in the line of large birds, the world had nothing more to offer.

I assured him that the bald eagle was nowhere in comparison (the condor is really only half as large again as the eagle, but, you see, I was feeling enthusiastic), and rather indifferently, as I thought, he gave it another look. He was not what we call a "bird man," that was evident; and by and by, when the vulture had passed out of sight beyond Mount Wilson, he informed me that *his* hobby was astronomy. I was pleased to know he had so good a one; but, for myself, at that moment I was amazingly contented with my own. It was wonderful how easy the grade was from that point. Such is the power of mind over matter. I could have gone on indefinitely, and never known I was weary. If there had been nobody near, I believe I should have shouted.

For the hour or more that I remained at the summit I took two looks heavenward to one at the earthly prospect, beautiful as that was; and all the way down to the tavern I was continually stopping to see whether peradventure the vulture might not be again somewhere above me. That, I was to learn, was asking a little too much of Dame Fortune. Already I had received far more than my share of her favors, as the ornithologist before mentioned gave me emphatically to understand when I narrated to him my day's adventure. Many a good Californian, I understood him, had desired to see what I had seen, and had died without the sight.

Within a week, indeed, I was to have another and much longer and more satisfying interview with the same bird, or another like him; but that is part of another story. Enough to say now that he looked half as large again the second time as he did the first, and that I am more than ever a believer in that mysterious and delectable something which goes by the name of "green hands' luck."

MY FIRST WATER-OUZELS

THERE is no California bird, not even the big vulture, that I have been more insistent upon seeing than the water-ouzel. There is none to which so romantic an interest attaches. And it may be added that there is none which has cost me so many steps.

It is a bird of mountain cañons; not of their precipitous rocky sides, like the cañon wren, but of their hurrying brooks, and especially of their waterfalls. Technically, as men take account of such things, it is a land-bird, as under the same ruling the snipe and the woodcock are water-birds. But the bird does not know it. Where there is no water, look for no ouzel. As well seek the kingfisher, another "land-bird," on the desert, or the hummingbird where there are no blossoms.

There were cañons at San Diego, but no mountain cañons; and there were mountains at Witch Creek, but no wild mountain brooks; so it was not until I reached Pasadena that I began to cast about in earnest for the home of the ouzel.

Three cañons were named to me; all rather far removed, but, the inducement being weighed, not too far. In so important a cause I was ready to sacrifice any reasonable amount of shoe-leather.

First, although this was an accident, due to insufficient, or insufficiently understood, directions, I tried the nearest and smallest. It was a pretty place, with something of a brook; but it seemed to be much frequented by picnickers, and perhaps was not secluded enough for the hermit[1] I was seeking. Be that as it might, I did not find him.

Then I tried a second and larger cañon, two miles or more beyond, a distance which I increased materially by mistaking my course, stumbling into the arroyo too far down, and blundering about among the boulders a long while before striking the trail, so making a long and tiresome day of what should have been a comparatively short and easy one. And after all, though I sat for some time within sight of the cascade which had been my goal, I found no sign that any water-ouzel had ever been there. But for a soli-

[1] On further acquaintance I should hardly call the ouzel a hermit, nor does he confine himself to mountain brooks. At Sisson I found him more than once singing from a boat drawn up on the bank of a small roadside lake; and at Banff and in the Yosemite, as well as in the Ute Pass at Manitou, I have seen him perfectly at home where men on foot and in carriages were continually passing close by him, or over his head. There are few birds, indeed, that seem less put out by human propinquity.

taire, a most distinguished, aristocratic-seeming bird, always good to look at (this was only my second one), and a fretful cañon wren, the day would have been ornithologically a waste.

A second visit to the same cañon was equally unproductive, except that I took great interest in hearing for the first time the song of the Western robin. A large flock of the birds, a hundred or more, sat in a group of tall sycamores in the arroyo (the dry, rocky, gravelly, flood-wrought river-bed which leads into — or out of — every such ravine in this summer-dry Southwestern country), and one or two among them were in free voice. Their calls I had previously found to be indistinguishable from those of their Eastern relative. Now I learned, what I had found no book to tell me, that the same is true of the song itself. If I had heard it in Massachusetts, I should have remarked nothing peculiar about it.

The next morning, having been at all pains to obtain particular instructions, I set out for the third cañon, a last resort, a case of now or never, so far as the neighborhood of Pasadena was concerned. By a stroke of good fortune, when I had left the street-car and trudged across lots to the "avenue" that I had been instructed to follow, — an avenue running between orange groves and vineyards, and shaded by pepper-trees, — I was presently overtaken by a heavy wagon drawn by a pair of mules, the young driver of which invited me to ride.

"Thank you," said I, and clambered up into the lofty seat beside him. "I am going into the cañon," I said.

"Just where I am going," he answered.

He was hauling stone out of the arroyo, it seemed. So this time I not only had made sure of my course, but was spared a mile or two of walking.

The cañon proved to be a romantic, closely walled place, narrowly tucked in between two contiguous mountains, each about six thousand feet high, and made alive, as it were, by the clearest of mountain brooks, while the deliciously sweet falling whistle of a cañon wren seemed to bid me welcome as I entered. Yes, said I, this is the place, and this is the day; and now for the water-ouzels!

Up the brook I went, first on this side for a few rods, then on the other for a like distance, as the water left room for me against the base of the cliff, till by and by I came to the falls, which, for any but initiated or decidedly resolute explorers, must be accepted as the head of the cañon. For myself, and for to-day, at all events, there was no thought of proceeding farther. And within five minutes I saw that to-day's quest, like the others, was to end in failure. The falls, some fifteen or twenty feet in height, and the inviting pool of still water below, seemed to be all that the most fastidious ouzel could ask for; but the ouzel was not there.

I was nearly discouraged, but hope revived overnight, as it so often does (this is partly what nights are for); and in the morning I said, "I will try that place again."

That was one of my good sayings. Socrates, in the same case, could n't have done better. I had gone perhaps halfway to the falls when I was startled by a rattle of loud, sharp cries, which seemed to rise from the bed of the brook in front; and two birds (I could not remember a minute afterward whether I had seen them or only heard them) went flying round the next turn up the stream. I stole hurriedly along, over boulders and what-not; and soon the same piercing calls were repeated. This time I saw nothing; but I understood now that I had only one chance left. If I was to overtake the birds again, it must be at the fall. Once above that, they would be lost.

Quietly — as quietly as possible, the going being what it was — I hastened forward till at last I had gone as far as I dared. If a side approach had been possible, the thing might have been easy; but the perpendicular walls shut me in, and I could do nothing but follow the brook. Then, with my glass focused upon the pool and the cascade above it, I waited. No sight, no sound. Hope was fading out, when a bird called. My eye followed the sound; and there, on the face of the cliff, wet by the spray of the falling water, stood the small, dusky creature that I had spent so many hours in seeking. Up and down he bobbed, wren fashion, on his light-colored legs, at every motion uttering a note of complaint; and then he took wing, flew up the fall and through the narrow opening above it, and was gone.

I lingered about the spot, keeping as much in shadow as might be, — the opportunity being of the poorest, — and even went back again and again after quitting the place altogether, in hope that the birds might have returned; but they had gone upstream for the day. It was too bad! So short a look after so long a hunt! But, anyhow, I had seen them. And who could tell? There would be another day to-morrow, and possibly I should then have better luck. So I munched my crackers and chocolate, and started for the last time downstream.

All this while, I should have said, I had been casting frequent glances skyward in search of the California condor. Unless it were the mountain-top, there could be no place where my chance of seeing him should be better. And sure enough, while I was still shut between the rocky walls, I looked up once more; and there he hung, in mid-air, a mile or so, it might be, overhead. Twice he turned in such a way that the sunlight shone full upon the under surface of his wings, lighting up the white coverts. It was he, my second sight of him. And this time how big he looked!

He disappeared all too quickly, but within fifteen minutes, when I had sat down in a little wider space to rest, with more sky-room overhead, I beheld him again. Now, by good luck, he was soaring in circles, and remained in sight a long while; and as often as he came about, those snow-white patches were illuminated. Higher and higher he rose, till if I lowered my glass I had hard work to find him again; and the greater the height, so it seemed, the larger he looked. Like Niagara and other such wonders, he was growing upon me.

I lost him at last, and had gone a good piece farther, when the same bird, or possibly another, came into sight once more, this time moving in a straight course with wings set. Half a mile, at least, I must have watched him fly without a stroke, till he disappeared over the eastern wall of the cañon. "Well, well," said I, "this is my lucky day."

A few rods more, and I was out of the cañon, away from the noise of the brook, in the dry, boulder-sprinkled bed of the arroyo. Here I dallied along, having still a considerable part of the afternoon before me, noticing a pair of scolding vireos (Hutton's), and the bright, orange-colored, heavy-scented clusters of wallflower (a kind of maidenhair fern was common, also), when all at once I descried a pair of large birds soaring not far off. I lifted my glass; and behold, they were golden eagles. And a splendid chance they gave me, being at first extraordinarily near (for eagles), and then rising in circles as the condor had done. Sometimes the two were within the field of the glass at once. For a while they seemed to feel a lively curiosity about me, or about something in my neighborhood, craning their necks to look downward, and so displaying again and again the golden brown of their foreheads. Wonderfully athletic-looking birds they were, with that firm, immovable set of the outspread wings — like the condor in that respect, and very unlike the turkey vulture, whose tilting, unstable-seeming flight identifies him from afar.

And now what next? I thought. But that was the end. And for one day it was enough. "My lucky day," I called it. And so it was; for on the morrow, hoping to duplicate the experience, at least in part, I visited the same cañon again; and lo, there was neither ouzel nor condor, nor so much as an eagle. There was nothing for me to do but to enjoy the cañon itself, with the flowers and the ferns, and to ruminate upon my good fortune of the day before. "If you would see things," I said, "you must be willing to go and go, and go again, and be thankful for what is shown you." All things come to him who keeps going. I should never have seen the ouzels if I had sat on my doorstep and whistled for them.

Just a week afterward, let it be added, for the sake of finishing the story, I went to the same cañon once more. A special breakfast had been ordered the night previous; for this time, if the thing were possible, I meant to be on hand so early that nobody should have preceded me on the cañon trail. That, I considered, was my only chance of success.

Well, I reached the entrance in excellent season and in high spirits, but just as I was preparing to put my superfluous umbrella (little shade) into hiding a stranger's voice made itself heard from the bank immediately over my head. "Is this Eaton Cañon?" it inquired. I answered that it was. "It is a pretty place," the stranger said; "I've just been up to the head of it." It was well he could not read my feelings at that moment. I have seldom hated a man so cordially. "All this trouble for nothing!" I thought, and my spirits dropped to zero in no time.

Nevertheless, having got rid of my questioner as quickly as the briefest touch of politeness would permit, I followed the trail up to the falls. No ouzel, of course. I waited and waited, and at last gave over the search, comforting myself as best I could with the thought that possibly I might even yet have sight of a condor. No loafer of a tourist could have frightened *him* away. I loitered and looked, now standing, now strolling, now seated at my luncheon; but condors were as scarce as water-ouzels, and by and by I started homeward. That plague of an over-punctual man, who had no business in the cañon beyond an idle curiosity, had ruined my day.

But then, at the last minute, some influence brought me to a better mind. "I'll give myself one more chance," I said; "probably I shall never be here again." And with that I took off my coat, and trudged once more up the trail. It was the old story till I came within sight of the falls. Then the now familiar notes were sounded, and in a moment my glass was on the birds.

There they stood, each on a boulder, gesticulating and scolding, and to my delight one of them presently dropped into the pool and swam across it. And now my attention was caught by the fact that every time either of them bobbed up and down he winked! For an instant his dark eye flashed white!

The effect was weird, I may truly say comical. A most extraordinary trick it surely seemed, the reason or motive of which I must leave for others to conjecture. For myself, I do not wonder that John Muir, in his prose poem upon the water-ouzel, one of the most supremely beautiful chapters ever written about any bird, makes no allusion to this habit. It would have been a jarring note. I looked and laughed, till at length the birds flew to the cascade wall, stood there for a minute or two side by side, still bobbing and winking, and then vanished upstream.

Probably I shall never have a nearer sight of them or of any like them. But how close I had come to missing my opportunity! And how many good things we must all have missed at one time and another, for lack of the one more trial that would have paid us thrice over for all our pains!

AN UNSUCCESSFUL HUNT

I REACHED Paso Robles toward evening, after a nine-hour ride along the coast from Los Angeles. One of the first things to be done, after getting a bit settled, was to inquire of the hotel clerk whether there was any one in the town who might be supposed to know something about the birds of the neighborhood; not game birds necessarily, I explained, but birds in general. He looked thoughtful for a moment; then he rang for Victor, one of the bell-boys.

Yes, the boy said, there was a man named Smith, who kept a bicycle-shop and a garage. He took hunters out, and might be able to give me some information.

To Mr. Smith I went, therefore, the next morning. Did he know where I might possibly find any band-tailed pigeons or yellow-billed magpies? His answer was less discouraging than I had feared it would be. The pigeons, he thought, *might* be found up by the Sand Spring. And the Sand Spring? Why, that was about five miles out, on the road to a certain mine. I might go out on the stage, and walk back. As for magpies, he had n't seen one for several years.

At that moment, however, he hailed a neighbor passing along the sidewalk. "I say," he said, "do you know any place where this man could see magpies? Would n't he be likely to find some down at Santa Margarita?" The neighbor thought it doubtful. He had n't known of any there for some time. After further conference they agreed that my best chance was over at So-and-So's sheep-ranch, twenty-five or thirty miles away. But, indeed, they concluded, there *might* be some near the Sand Spring.

"Very good," said I to myself, "I will try the Sand Spring." The stage, Victor informed me, left the town at seven o'clock, at which hour I should be just sitting down to early breakfast. All things considered, I would walk. Unlike a good part of the visitors at Paso Robles, I was not seriously rheumatic, and ten miles, for all day, would hurt nobody.

With a bite of luncheon in my pocket I started out the next morning (February 22) at half past seven, but the first man whom I asked to put me on the Adelaide road proved to be the stage-driver himself, just leaving the post-office. He was late, he explained—so many errands, and so many waits. Lucky waits, thought I, as I mounted the wagon; and after a few more errands, including the purchase of a sack of cabbages and a stop at his own door to get an overcoat and a hot footstone (tenderfoots were not all just out of Yankeeland, it appeared), we were fairly on our way.

Pretty soon I broached the matter of the pigeons. The driver sniffed. I shouldn't find any. As for the distance to the Sand Spring, it was nearer ten miles than five. In that case, I perceived, it was well I had a pair of horses to draw me. Twenty miles, with the road muddy to desperation, would have been more than so doubtful a chance was worth. (But "twenty miles" was a gross exaggeration, if my legs told anything like the truth on the return.)

Fortunately I had brought a light overcoat along, and, with a venerable bed-comforter wrapped about our knees, we made the trip in a satisfactory degree of comfort, asking and answering questions, and discussing all sorts of subjects, from Roman Catholicism and almond orchards (in lovely bloom along the roadside) to gall-stones and appendicitis, for the driver, though a cheerful body, seemed inclined to let his mind run upon rather gruesome topics. Some men are like that, it would be hard to say why. Perhaps their ancestors were butchers or body-snatchers, or followers of some similar line of industry. After a while, in an indifferent tone, I inquired whether he knew anything about magpies. Yes;

he had frequently seen them up at the Divide, two or three miles beyond the Sand Spring.

"All right," said I. "I'll go on to the Divide. No magpies, no pay."

He laughed. "Oh, no," he said. "I don't guarantee anything; but I've seen them there."

His luck had been better than his passenger's was to prove. I got out of the wagon at the Divide, stretched my legs and shook myself, and then rolled under the close barbed-wire fence, and went down into the "swale," which had been pointed out as the most likely resort of the yellow-bills.

Birds were flitting about in encouraging numbers: robins, bluebirds, flickers, slender-billed nuthatches, Sierra juncos, and California jays, with others, no doubt, not now remembered. And while I looked at them, and listened with all my ears for a magpie's voice, a pair of golden eagles sailed over my head, and before long a red-tailed hawk followed suit. It was indeed a birdy spot; but for this morning there were no magpies, and, finding it so, I started slowly back over the road up which we had driven.

The first four miles would be much the most interesting, and, the temperature being by this time perfect, I meant to make the most of them. A merry heart, an untraveled road, wide horizons, and close at hand pretty things more than any one pair of eyes could take account of, — all this, with "health and a day," and magpies or no magpies, pigeons or no pigeons, a man might esteem himself pretty well off.

Here, now, falling away from my feet, was a broad steep hillside profusely set with wild currant bushes (incense shrubs), six feet or more in height, freshly green, and loaded with racemes of fragrant pink blossoms. Among the most attractive shrubs I had ever seen, whether in field or garden, they seemed to me. And with them were many "Christmas-berry" bushes, — California holly, — splendid in yellow-green leaf and scarlet fruit, and just now haunted by flocks of robins. All along the roadside, too, stood the curious "tree poppy," — my second sight of it, — rather stiff and homely as a bush (of about my own height), but bearing at the top a sparse crop of sun-bright yellow poppies.

What a little way it turned out to be down to the Sand Spring watering-trough! I was there before I knew it. It would be too bad if the remaining six or seven miles should be of similar brevity.

In the neighborhood of the trough I still entertained a faint hope of coming upon the big blue pigeon. A cañon full of live-oaks and various shrubs ran down from the road, and I followed it for a short distance. No pigeons. And my faith was so weak, and my mood by this time so little ambitious, that I soon returned to the road and to my idle sauntering. For to-day it was enough to loiter and breathe and look. There are other things in the world besides band-tailed pigeons, said I.[1]

And true to the word, I was soon close upon a flock of golden-crowned sparrows. They were no novelty. I had seen many like them. But these were in song; and that *was* a novelty; a brief and simple tune, making me think of the opening notes of the Eastern white-throat, but stopping short of that bird's rollicking triplets, ending almost before it began, as if it had been broken off in the middle, with a sweetly plaintive cadence. Like the white-throat's, and unlike the white-crown's, the tone is a pure whistle, so that the strain can be imitated, even at a first hearing, well enough to excite the birds to its repetition. I proved it on the spot.

Wren-tits were often near by, and of course the same was true of the plain titmice. The titmice, indeed, might almost have been called the

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[1] A few days later I paid a second visit to the Spring, this time on foot, and was fortunate enough to find a few of the pigeons flitting about among the oaks.

AN OAK PASTURE NEAR PASO ROBLES

birds of the day, their voices were so continually in my ears. Three times, at least, I heard what should have been a brand-new bird, and each time the stranger turned out to be a plain tit rehearsing another tune. At the best he is only an indifferent singer, but his versatility is remarkable. He is one of the wise ones who make the most of a small gift. A good example for the rest of us. Robins were in the air, in the trees, and (especially) in the Christmas-berry bushes. Now and then, for some reason, they would set up a chorus of cackles, and anon a hundred or more would go past me on the wing.

One of the sights here (at Paso Robles, I mean) is the leafless oaks, their drooping branches heavily draped with gray lichen. The gray-bearded oaks, they might be called. From my elevated position I could see broad hillsides loosely sprinkled with them. And one of the sights of this particular walk was a great display of manzanita bushes, now in full flower and vocal with bees: the blossoms (of this kind of manzanita) white, the foliage whitish, and the bark of the richest mahogany-red. The bush — which is sometimes almost a tree — is one of the curiosities, not to say one of the glories, of California.

Just at noon my fancy was taken with the look of a solitary ranch lying on a long sunny slope a little below my level; solitary, yet with something uncommonly thrifty and homelike about it, up there by itself among the hills, no neighbors in sight, only the hills, the valley, and the friendly sky. A dog lay asleep on the piazza, and the woman of the house was at work among her plants under the windows. It is encouraging to think that there are still people in the world who do not need to live in a city, or even in a village.

Another ranch, a few miles nearer town, was less pleasing in its aspect: a rough shed of a house, never half built and now long uncared for, a small, straggling orchard of fruit trees, equally unkempt, and a wreck of a barn. A letter-box by the roadside bore in lead-pencil the name of the occupant; a bachelor, he must be, I said; certainly a man with no woman's hand to care for him; else there would have been at least a geranium or a rose-bush in sight.

The name appealed to me, for personal reasons; and, when I came opposite an old man cutting wood not far down the road, I hailed him. Was he the George —— whose name I had seen on the letter-box a short distance back? He answered that he was. I explained my cousinly interest in the name, and in an easy, manly tone he told me his story.

He came to California in '49, and had been here ever since. Now he was seventy-six years old, well worn out, only waiting for the end.

"You did n't make your everlasting fortune in the mines?" I said.

It sounds like anything but a pretty question, but the tone, I hope, went some way to save it.

"Well, I made something," he answered. He had considered himself, not rich, perhaps, no, not rich, but "medium" (and he named a modest figure), till a few years ago, when everything he had was destroyed by fire. Since then he had lived from hand to mouth. At present he was squatting here on an absentee's ranch, and earning his bread by cutting wood. Oh, no, he had no desire to go back East. His many brothers (he named them over) were every one dead, and a Maine winter, with all that snow and ice, was frightful to think of.

I left him at his task. Two hours of it, he had told me, were enough to wear him out. His great trouble was catarrh. He was "all eaten up with it." "What, here in California?" said I. Oh, California was the worst place in the world for catarrh, he declared. It was a very natural disease, he had read, and had increased greatly since the fashion of taking snuff had gone out.

So, with a pleasing mixture of humanity and ornithology, which really go well together, a fact that speaks well for both of them, I beguiled the way. And a good time I made of it. It is often so, not of a day only, but of a man's life: the best things are found after the hunt has failed.

YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIES

MY two unsuccessful jaunts at Paso Robles in search of yellow-billed magpies only put a keener edge upon my appetite. By this time, indeed, to use an expressive colloquialism, common when I was younger, I had magpies on the brain. If such birds were to be seen, at any reasonable price, I wished to see them. I had heard, before leaving Massachusetts, that this might possibly be accomplished in the vicinity of Monterey; but a famous California ornithologist, to whom I am indebted for many favors, had done his best to make an end of all such expectations. There *were* no magpies about Monterey, he said, in a tone of positiveness. He had been there, and he knew. Happily, however, there is always the possibility of error in assertions of this kind, no matter who makes them, and I still cherished an unspoken hope that my original information, which likewise had seemed to come from excellent authority, might turn out to be correct. It is no very serious offense, no sacrilege, surely, to question even a scientific man's knowledge, so long as it is of a negative sort, and so long, especially, as he is not admitted into the secret of our skepticism.

When I had been at Pacific Grove — on the Monterey peninsula — about a week, I walked a few miles over the hill for a look down into Carmel Valley, of the beauty and birdiness of which I had received alluring reports; and on my way back, after a forenoon of exceeding pleasure, a young man driving into Monterey with a load of apples (Carmel apples are in high repute hereabout, it appears, though my difficult Yankee mouth was always hankering for a tart New England russet), offered me a lift. Half reluctantly I accepted the invitation, and it was well I did.

We fell into talk, of course, and presently it became known, some things being difficult of concealment, that I was in search of birds, and wanted of all things to see a few yellow-billed magpies. "Magpies?" the young man responded, looking up with something of surprise in his face. Yes, I said; I had heard that there were some on a certain ranch somewhere out this way, So-and-So's ranch. Did he know where it was?

Oh, yes, he knew the place. But it was a hard one to get at, especially just now, since the recent heavy rains had swollen the river. But why did n't I go down to such-and-such a creek, he asked. For that I should n't have to cross the river; and there were magpies there, he was sure. He had often seen them. "Black and white," he added, "with yellow bills; very noisy."

"Good for you!" I thought. "You're the very man I've been looking for." Indeed, I not only thought so, but said so; and he proceeded to give me as definite instructions as might be concerning the road, though they sounded none too clear, I must confess.

I was to drive about twenty miles from Monterey, keeping to such-and-such a course, till I came to a certain man's ranch. There, or near there, I should find a creek. At the creek, the name of which I do not print because — for one reason — I have found nobody who can tell me how to spell it, I was to take to my legs, turning to the left and following the cañon. There I should find the magpies. I could n't miss them. At least, my informant had never been there without seeing some.

Several days passed. I made inquiries at a livery-stable, but received no great encouragement. The place was a long way off, much farther than my young man had put it. (Livery-keepers' miles are apt to be many.) They would send me out, if I said so; but it would be a hard day's trip, and they appeared to have no driver who knew anything in particular about the route. Meanwhile, I was having royal luck with a set of migratory shore-birds, and even the yellow-billed magpies must wait. They *would* wait, while migrants, like Folly, must be taken as they fly.

Then came a lull, and at another stable I found the very driver I was seeking. He knew nothing about magpies, he confessed, but he knew the road, and by half past seven the next morning, it was agreed, we would be on the way.

The weather was most propitious; the sky cloudless, with exactly enough of a light breeze blowing; and when we had mounted the long hill, through the Monterey pines, and come out upon a grassy slope sprinkled with strangely picturesque, wind-swept, one-sided evergreen oaks, not far from the Carmel Mission and the mouth of the Carmel River, the valley lay before us, a scene of enchanting beauty.

The driver proved to be conversable (a good listener, too, which is half the battle); the horses promised to be equal to all we should ask of them; birds were numerous; flocks of white seagulls dotted the brown, cultivated lands, where they follow the plough like so many blackbirds; the fields and roadsides were bright with suncups (a kind of dwarf evening primrose), saucy-faced, long-stemmed yellow violets, and other blossoms; and it was impossible not to feel that this time my hunt was fated to prosper.

Once in five miles, or some such matter, we passed a house (the driver knew every one by its owner's name); two or three times a road-runner was seen skulking amid the chaparral, his long, expressive tail rising and falling; and by and by we came to clumps of trees that pleased me as much, perhaps, as any of the lesser things that I have seen in California: California buckeyes; not yet in bloom, but covered with such a canopy of new leaves, and so matchless in shape — low, round-topped, wide-spreading, a perfect dome of greenery — well, there is no saying how I appreciated their loveliness. If they are not cultivated, as I have never heard that they are, it must be, I should think, because gardeners do not quite know their business. About the same time, perhaps before it, we passed my first fuchsia-flowered gooseberry-bushes, their downward-curving branches hung so thickly with long, odd-shaped scarlet blooms that I felt at first as if I were looking at good Yankee-land barberry-bushes loaded with dead-ripe fruit.

We had been on the road about four hours when we met a man, a German, it seemed, in an open wagon. "We'll ask *him* about it," said the driver; and he pulled up the horses.

Such a creek? Yes, the German knew it. It was about four miles ahead. Was there water in it? Well, there *might* be — a little. How should we know when we got to it? There was a gate close by.

Then I explained, in a word, what I was after, a certain kind of bird, a magpie. Oh, yes, the stranger answered, with no sign of surprise, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for a man to drive fifty miles, without a gun, to look at magpies! — Oh, yes, I should find them. "Go in at the gate," he said. And then he added, "You may have to go up as far as the house; but you 'll find 'em." Heaven bless the man, say I, who has the wit and the will to deal in particulars when information is wanted.

My spirits ran high. The game was as good as won. And shortly, before I had noticed anything of the kind myself, while I supposed, indeed, that we had still a mile or two to travel, the driver said, "This must be the creek." Sure enough there was a dribble of water, at which, with patience, a man might fill a quart cup. Yes, and there was the gate. "All right," said I, as my feet struck the ground; "I 'll find you here when I come back."

I proceeded cautiously up the path beside the brook. Birds of various sorts were in the bushes, but I would not stay to notice them. A strange warbler, even, could not detain me. Perhaps it would be there when I returned. If not, no matter. It was probably a lutescent warbler, I knew afterward, when I could spare my wits to consider the matter. For the minute I could think of only one thing; there was only one thing that I wanted to see, a black-and-white bird with a long tail and a yellow bill.

Up the ravine I went, and still no sign. Hope was growing less, my spirits less exuberant. Then I came within sight of a distant shanty in a clearing, and recalled our German friend's caution. Even yet there was a chance. Across the wide grassy field I hastened, and up to the house, which turned out to be inhabited, a thing I should have deemed impossible. Nobody was in sight, but I could hear a Mexican or Spanish woman crooning to her baby as she rocked it to sleep.

I took my station near the corner of the house, in the shade of a cypress tree, and waited. Minutes passed, — five minutes, ten minutes, — and no magpie, nor any sound of one. And then, before I knew it, my eye was on the bird. She (I suppose it was she) was coming up from the bottom of the valley, a few rods off, bringing her tail behind her; and in her yellow bill she held a stick. She was building a nest! True enough, she flew to the top of the nearest oak, a solitary tree, standing a hundred feet away, lit on the rim of the already large nest (as large as a half-bushel basket, I said half an hour later, when I went under the tree to inspect it), and carefully worked the twig into its place in the wall.

For the three quarters of an hour that I remained she and her mate were in sight the greater part of the time. Twice, at least, another stick was added to the nest; but in general both birds did nothing in particular, and to my disappointment had practically nothing to say. Perhaps it was because of a stranger's presence; but I doubt it; they showed no concern, nor even curiosity, about him, as he stood, glass in hand, under the cypress. More likely (at high noon, the sky cloudless) it was their quiet hour.

Greedily my eyes fed upon them. Not that they were handsomer, or better, or intrinsically more interesting than forty other birds; but they were what I had been seeking; they were rare, or so I thought; they had cost me labor; the sight of them had been more than once almost despaired of.

A hummingbird was every minute or two buzzing in the branches directly over my head, but at first I could not look up. (She, too, was building a nest. I saw it half an hour later.) The woman sang to her baby; I could hear all the while the rhythmical creak of the cradle or the hammock-rope; a pair of red-tailed hawks came and went persistently, as if the place belonged to them; a flock of grackles chattered in the cow-yard; quail were calling from the hillside; a bluebird perched near me, the very hue of heaven on his wings. Indeed, it was a peaceful, heavenly hour in that little cup of a valley, full of California sunshine — an hour I am likely to remember.

I came away, leaving the two magpies standing in the freshly green grass. A pretty picture. The strange warbler still flitted among the willow branches, singing a bit of a ditty as I passed. And the driver waited at the gate. "I found 'em," said I; and he seemed to share my happiness.

And what a pleasant drive it was homeward, with ten thousand things to look at, and all the way the beauty of the valley, the river, and the hills! I recall with special delight a field brightly purple with wild portulacas. Tiny flowers they are, of the nature of weeds, I suppose; but in the mass, and in the sun, and by the acre, they make a natural garden such as not even the more famous California poppy can surpass. And hour after hour, whenever there was no compelling cause to look at anything else, I was looking at those two yellow-billed magpies. May no plague come nigh their dwelling.

SOME ROCK-HAUNTING BIRDS

WHICH do we enjoy most, the good things we have long sought and at last have found, or those that fall in our way as surprises? For myself, I do not know, nor do I think it greatly matters. If the good things will only come, say I, let them come in whichever way they will; and, if they are kind enough to come in both ways, why, then may I have the grace to be doubly thankful.

Here in California, certainly, speaking as a bird-lover, I have been blessed in both kinds. Some things I have earned, if I may say so, by diligent inquiry and seeking. Others, equally esteemed, have, as it were, stepped forth to meet me. "Behold us," they have said. "You seem not to have been looking for us; maybe you have never heard of us; but here we are."

Pacific Grove, at which I tarried in preference to its older and more famous neighbor, Monterey, is in two capital respects an ideal place for a walking naturalist. It is situated on a peninsula, with the bay shore — a bay as beautiful, especially in the late afternoon, as anything earthly need be — on one side, and the ocean shore on the other;

and between the two are miles—enough, and not too many—of a companionable pine forest; a forest, I mean to say, that is large enough and dark enough to be impressive, —a real forest, that is, —yet so far open to the sun, and so easily traversed, as to put a congenial stroller, even within the first day or two, on terms of something like old acquaintance. Both shores, too, are happily diversified; a bold, rocky, surf-pounded coast for the most part, with here and there short sandy or pebbly beaches.

In the pine woods were many interesting things, with which I am not here concerned. The beaches brought me nothing, not so much as a single wader, I believe; but the surf-beaten rocks, of which, in my ignorance, I had made no great account, were generous with surprises. I was fortunate, I suppose, in happening along at exactly the right minute to catch certain rock-haunting species in the course of their northward migration.

It was on the fourth of March that I walked through the forest to the ocean, and then, turning to the right, sauntered slowly down the coast toward the lighthouse. Moss Beach was empty as usual, and I had gone some distance beyond, over the dunes, looking for nothing in particular (some of my best hours were of this complexion, for even a naturalist may now and then have a thought or two outside the range of his specialty) when all at once sharp outcries were heard just in front, and the next moment two sharp-winged birds wheeled round a rock and disappeared. My dreamy mood was gone in a twinkling. These birds were almost certainly strangers; and what were they?

I followed them, practising all stealth, and by and by, to my delight, behold, one of them stood directly before me on the top of a rock, preening its feathers, in full view and the best of light — a sandpiper, with something of the look and action of both the spotted and the solitary; new, beyond question, and requiring to be scrutinized in every feather. Sometimes it nodded in the manner of a plover; oftener it teetered like a spotted sandpiper; while its legs were of a color almost lively enough — but shading too much to olive — for the bird that we know as "yellow-legs."

A long while it posed there, much of the time on one leg, the light favoring me so that every little while I could see its eye turn white as the nictitating membrane — so I believe it is called — was drawn over it. Then it flew a short distance (this was what I was waiting for), and I made sure that there were no white markings on wings or tail, a point of almost decisive importance, as of itself it ruled out three or four birds that, in the retrospect, — when skepticism, given half a chance, is sure to have its finger in the pie, — might be troublesome as complicating the question of its identity.

This time, to my great satisfaction, it went down close to the surf, where the rocks were thickly matted with seaweeds, and began feeding, jumping into the air at short intervals, as a higher wave than common threatened to carry it away. Once it caught a fish, or other creature, of considerable size, and seemed not a little excited, beating its prize violently against the rock again and again, and finally swallowing it with difficulty, holding its bill open for some time in the operation.

By this time I had come to a pretty strong conviction that the stranger must be *Heteractitis*, the wandering tattler, though I had no definite recollection of that bird's plumage (a species never seen east of the Pacific coast), and knew absolutely nothing about the kind of places it frequented. The controlling consideration, in my present state of ignorance, was that the bird could be nothing else.

My guess proved to be correct. Possibly I should not be mentioning it here, had it turned out otherwise. When I got back to the hotel, and brought my penciled description to the book, everything tallied, as we say. But the book, for lack of knowledge on the part of its author, it is to be presumed, had nothing whatever to tell me concerning the wandering tattler's feeding-habits. Resort was had by letter to a man who would be able to enlighten me upon that point, and he replied that *Heteractitis* haunted the rocks, not beaches nor flats.

Here, then, was a bird I had never counted upon, an extra, as it were, thrown in for good measure.

Two mornings afterward I went through the forest again; but this time, on reaching the ocean shore, I turned to the left and walked as far as the Seal Rocks, so called, where all Del Monte and Monterey tourists who take the famous seventeen-mile drive (it was one of my good days in California when I first made the round on foot), stop for a minute or two to look at the seals, fifty or more of which, if the tide favors, may commonly be seen basking in the sun. The largest of the rocks, all of which are a little off-shore, is monopolized by flocks of sea-birds, pelicans and cormorants especially, which have whitened its whole surface down to highwater mark.

I was looking at this rock, counting the cormorants and pelicans, and making out as well as I could the identity of the gulls, — the beautiful

MIDWAY POINT, SEVENTEEN-MILE DRIVE, NEAR PACIFIC GROVE

Heermann gull among the rest, — when I was startled by a set of loud, clear, piercing whistles, and the next instant saw four red-billed birds skimming over the water between me and the rocks. Another minute, and they had alighted on one of the smaller of them, and I was repeating to myself, in a kind of ecstasy, "Oyster-catchers, black oyster-catchers!" Their stout bright bills and their general figure and attitudes, so like those of the Eastern bird, which I had seen a few years before at St. Augustine, Florida, could belong to nothing else.

The feet and legs were of a lively flesh color, the head and neck black, or nearly so, while the wings, the most beautiful part of them (they were in splendid light) were of the warmest, silkiest, shining brown, verging upon chestnut; as lovely a shade, I thought, as I had ever seen worn by any bird.

For a long time I kept my glass trained upon them, now prying barnacles, or things of that nature, off the rock, — sometimes putting themselves into odd positions in order to secure the needed purchase upon the shell, — now leaping into the air as a wave broke over their standing-place, and now taking a short flight, always with quickly repeated whistles of the loudest and clearest sort.

I had just lost them, — not entirely to my regret, a stitch in the side, from standing so still and holding the glass so motionless, making me glad of a chance to stretch myself, — when a little flock of smaller black-and-white birds came down the shore, uttering a chorus of rattling cries, and seemed to alight among the rocks just north of me. I gave chase, came up with them, and presently discovered that I had found another novelty, — a bunch of black turnstones; sooty black, an odd and striking shade, and clear white, the whole curiously splashed and mottled, giving them, even with no brown markings, something of the cotton-print, patchwork appearance of our Eastern "calico-bird."

I was still felicitating myself upon this run of luck, when on the same rocks I perceived three birds of quite another complexion; rather plumper and larger than the turnstones, in general of a beautiful slaty-gray color, and of a singular "spotty" look, to use the word that came of itself to my pencil. Without going into particulars as to legs, bill, tail, rump, and so forth, all of which were religiously jotted down, suffice it to say that these I settled upon as probably surf-birds, if, [illegible] said to myself, by way of caution, surf-birds are feeders upon rocks. For the birds before me kept persistently close to the water, on what looked at my distance like bare rocks, not offshore like those to which the oyster-catchers restricted themselves, nor covered with seaweed like those resorted to by the wandering tattlers. Once — but this was on the next day, and there were then four of the birds — they occupied themselves a long time on the face of a rock that inclined seaward, running up into sight as the higher waves chased them, and anon hastening down again as the water receded.

The turnstones, having a way of their own, fed mostly from rocks nearer land, and between whiles walked about the beach, picking up morsels as they went.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib"; and so every kind of bird seems to know where the table is spread for it.

The surf-birds (as to the identity of which, as well as of the wandering tattlers, I afterwards reassured myself by an examination of skins in the fine collection of the Academy of Sciences, at San Francisco) interested me the more because of an anecdote related to me a good while ago by a friend who for some years had been a bird-collector for the Smithsonian Institution, and in pursuit of his calling had traveled pretty well over the southwestern United States. On one of his trips to the Pacific coast, as I remember the story, he had finished his stint, packed his trunks, guns and all, and then, having an hour to spare, strolled out upon the shore. And there, to his unspeakable chagrin, were birds of a kind he had long looked for and never seen! Surf-birds, he said they were, birds that at that time I had never heard of.

I forget the remainder of the story, if there was a remainder; but it impressed me as the height of a collector's tragedy, that he should have missed his one opportunity to secure specimens so desirable.

To this day, according to Mrs. Bailey's "Handbook," which is my *vade mecum* hereabouts, the breeding-grounds of the species are unknown, though an eminent authority upon the birds of the Pacific coast, Mr. L. M. Loomis, assures me that it is not rare during its migrations. Only, he adds, you must know how and where to look for it. Rare or not rare, however ("it has never been found in abundance," is Mrs. Bailey's way of putting the matter), I am glad to have seen it. I may almost say I am proud to have seen it — a bird which no man of science has ever succeeded in detecting at home. Somehow it is impossible not to feel a certain heightened respect for birds that have succeeded in keeping such a secret in despite of man's insatiable curiosity.

UNDER THE REDWOODS

LIKE my fellow tourists, though I was touring alone, I stopped at Santa Cruz for a sight of "the big trees." They would disappoint me at first, I had been warned; but nothing of the kind happened. After a day and a half spent in their shadow I could still only look up and wonder; and that, neither more nor less, was what I did on the first instant. Nor did my admiration exhaust itself upon the few largest and tallest. A little more in girth, or even a little more in height, seemed not to count for much with me. Even after I had looked for hours at the biggest and tallest of them I found myself seized with a feeling of something like awe at the sight of a group of smaller ones (smaller, but how they soared!) growing directly upon the roadside halfway between the famous grove and the city.

The grove itself is much less a grove, and much more a forest, than I had expected to find it. I was there almost by myself, having planned things to that end, and after getting away from the gate and the buildings near it, could wander about by the hour with a sense of real woodland seclusion and wildness. Not that a man could walk steadily for that length of time without a frequent return upon his steps, for the inclosure does not contain many acres; but I had no desire to walk steadily, nor any objection to passing again and again over the same ground. What I mean is, that the place is so dark, so densely shaded, so wild in itself, and so surrounded with wildness, that one has very little sensation of being in a park, and can often forget entirely that he is in a place devoted to exploitation and show. Wander far enough to get away from the sight of trees criminally disfigured by ugly, staring placards bearing the ridiculous titles of "Jumbo," "Roosevelt," and the like, and you are, as it were, taken into the very lap of Nature, and can rest there in wondering content.

As I have implied, it was the height of the trees, rather than their girth, that laid hold of my imagination. Their circumference I could walk around, but their altitude was like the divine wisdom: it was high; I could not attain unto it. I was never tired, though the muscles of my neck sometimes were, of looking up the straight, naked boles into the far-away tops. The tallest was only three hundred and six feet high, to be sure (a wind having broken off some seventy-five feet a few winters ago — I report what was told me); and the Northwest has many trees taller than that, I am assured. But then, I have never seen them; and, even if I had, still, three hundred feet is a pretty figure. If it is n't high, — and of course it is n't, absolutely speaking, — it *looks* high, and that, after all, is the main consideration. A tree that lifts its head so far heavenward — well, if you ask me, I think I could sooner worship it than any picture or graven image. If a man can stand under it, and not feel himself diminished, there must be something seriously wrong in his make-up.

It was surprising how dark and sunless the place was, even under a cloudless sky. One of the keepers said to me, "Oh, yes, it is all very well to spend an hour here, or even a day; but to *live* here, I tell you, it is pretty depressing." It was less so in summer, when the sun passed almost overhead, and could strike down between the trees.

I inquired about bird-life and bird-singing. There was very little of either, he answered; and I imagine he was right. The shadows are too dense; every tree interposing such an enormous depth of leafy cover, so many "layers of shade," between the sun and the ground. In summer, he added, the "jay birds" made a good deal of chattering. There were two kinds of them, he told me; and I knew as much already: a dark-blue kind, with a tall crest; and a lighter-blue one without a crest. I had seen both just outside the grove within an hour. In fact, ten of the crestless (California) jays were feeding together in the grass of the nearest field; and in the bushes near by were three or four coast jays (*carbonacea*), superb creatures, at which the blindest unornithological man in the world could not help looking.

In the grove itself, during my visits, the noisiest birds were a small number — perhaps only a pair — of California woodpeckers. They seemed to delight in high places, and not infrequently were calling, "Jacob, Jacob," in the hearty way to which I had become accustomed, not to say attached, during my week at Paso Robles, where they might almost be said to own the town, they were so many and so perfectly at home in the ancient, lichen-hung valley oaks.

Two kinds of birds sang in the grove, but in the remoter, less frequented parts of it only, and with voices so fine — so threadlike — that I did not think it strange that the keepers made no account of them. These were Western winter wrens and California brown creepers. Of the two the creepers were perhaps the more numerous; certainly they were oftenest heard. For a good while I could get no sight of the singers. It was the creeper's little wire-drawn, warble-like tune, I grew more and more convinced; but in that darksome place, and on those huge, lofty trunks, the difficulty was to put my eye on such an atom. At last it was done, however; and several times afterward I detected the tiny creatures, in their rustic pepper-and-salt coats, their legs straddled to their ridiculous utmost, hitching up a redwood bole till they got so high as to be nothing but a speck. Amazingly busy they seemed, not stopping a moment, even when they sang, but, like Wordsworth's reaper, singing at their work, and up the redwoods creeping.

Both wren and creeper were fairly numerous; but the wrens, though frequently seen, and oftener heard, dodging about and scolding in the underbrush, after the manner of their kind, were rather chary of their music, which, if I am to be judge, is somewhat inferior to that of the Eastern bird, not only in voice, which is "squeakier" (I am quoting my pencil — which is far from infallible on a question so nice), but in the length and spirit of the performance.

A hairy woodpecker of some kind was heard more than once, but was never seen; now and then a Sierra junco or two showed themselves, though they probably lived just outside the grove; and at the last minute of my farewell round on the second day I was delighted out of measure by the sight of a hermit thrush. It seemed the place of all places for him. If only he would have sung a few measures from the top of one of those sky-pointing, sky-piercing redwoods! The golden, leisurely notes, coming from so near heaven, would have sounded more angelic than ever.

On both days, too, though I was near forgetting to mention it, I heard repeatedly in a certain place the buzz of a hummer's wings; and once, for a minute, I caught sight of the bird, a female, darting about among the branches overhead. To all appearance she must have been at home there, strange and sombre abode as it seemed for such a lover of sunshine and flowers.

These, I think, were, with one exception, all the birds I saw or heard within the grove; but the exception was worth more than all the rest, a flock of five or six varied thrushes. How rejoiced I was to find them (my first glimpse of a bird much looked for) in so romantic and memorable a place!

They were shy beyond all reason, and on the first day kept so persistently in shadow that I could hardly say I had seen them at all. On the second day I was more fortunate: first with a splendid, full-plumaged male that stood on a low bough (not of a redwood; old redwoods have no low boughs), in a pretty good light, clucking softly, "as nervous as a witch," to quote my pencil again; behaving, in short, very much like a robin overtaken by a similar mood; and afterward, with a bird feeding in an open pasture along with the jays before mentioned. This one I stayed with a long time. In action he, too, was more than a little robin-like, seeming to depend largely upon his sense of hearing, standing motionless to listen, and then like a flash whirling squarely about and pouncing upon something or other that had stirred behind him in the grass.

Under trees so lofty, their tops so almost beyond one's vision, one feels after a little a need of lesser things to rest the eyes upon by way of relief and contrast; and under the redwoods this need was well provided for. The undergrowth of trees was composed mostly of bays, some of them of such a size as would be called large in any ordinary competition, madroñas, both trees and shrubs, — a novelty to me, and highly appreciated, — and the tanbark oak. The madroña I recognized at sight, its magnolia-like leaves and its bright mahogany-colored branches making its identity manifest to one who had read about it and had been expecting to find it.

As for the oaks, I had not so much as a suspicion of their true character. On the first day I noticed only shrubby growths, and, impelled by curiosity, carried a twig back to the hotel. There I showed it to a Santa Crucian, who answered readily that it was tanbark oak. "They use the bark in the big tannery here," he said. To speak frankly, I doubted his knowledge, the texture of the leaves being so radically unlike that of any *Quercus* leaf that I had ever seen.

The next day, however, in the grove itself, I found trees of a considerable size, and under them picked up acorns and curiously feathered acorn-cups; and within twenty-four hours, by a happy accident, my attention was directed to a recent magazine article in which the tree was described and its leaves and fruit figured. The tree is not a *Quercus*, it appears, but is of the genus *Pasania*, its only surviving congeners (but these number almost a hundred!) being found in Siam and the neighboring islands! A strange oak it surely is, and a strange history it must have had: an ancient genus, surviving from geologic times, we are told, equally related to *Quercus* and *Castanea*, to the oaks, that is, and the chestnuts. And now, in these last days, with all this ennobling family history behind it, it is being cut down for the tanning of shoe-leather. To such base uses do we come.

On the floor of the grove were beautiful and modest flowers: redwood oxalis, with its exquisite leaves and its lovely pink blossoms; an uncommonly pretty trillium, opening white and turning to a delicate rose-color; two kinds of yellow violets, one rather tall, with a leafy stem, like *Viola pubescens*, the other (*Viola sarmentosa*) of a lowly habit, as pretty and unassuming as the round-leaved violet of the East, after which nothing more need be said; the toothwort, which is everywhere in California, so far as I have seen, but nowhere more welcome than here; and a wild ginger (*Asarum*), with characteristic odd-shaped, long-horned blooms — grotesque, they might almost be called — tucked away under the spacious leaves.

Later in the season there would be other blossoms, for I noticed iris and various things coming along, and even a small wild rose bush. Redwood botany would be a highly interesting study, I told myself, if one could have the year long in which to pursue it.

But the redwoods themselves were the supreme consideration. Some of the largest, a small number, comparatively, stood alone. In reason they should be most effective so; but for myself I think I was more impressed by those that stood in a cluster or group, a lordly brotherhood of giants; the largest in the middle, then two, three, or four large ones supporting it, as it were, and just outside of these another circle of younger and smaller ones. In many instances it seems to be all but certain that the present trees — the present groups, especially — have sprung from stumps or roots of an earlier generation. Perhaps, after all, the giants were in *those* days. Far back those days must have been, for some of the trees that we now gaze upon with wonder, if we may believe what we read about them, were poets before David and philosophers before Solomon.

IN THE SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

TO a naturalist on his travels, enviable man, few places are at first sight less encouraging than a large city surrounded by wide areas of cultivated land. Such a place is San José, the principal town of the famous and beautiful Santa Clara Valley. One of the most beautiful valleys in California, it is said to be; and I can easily believe it. But a naturalist, as I say, even though he be also a lover of beauty, looks with distrust upon miles on miles of plum and cherry orchards. Plums and cherries may be never so much to his taste; but by the time an electric car has whirled him past a million or two of white trees (I am assuming the month to be March), and the ladies in the seat behind him have let off a hundred or two of exclamations, he, poor man, is ready to cry "Enough." Now, if you please, he would be thankful to see a stretch of "timber" (in the New England dialect, "woods"), a swamp, or even a desert; almost any sort of place, indeed, where he might expect to find a few wild things growing, and among them a few birds and butterflies flitting about.

The naturalist's predicament at San José, however, is not so hopeless as at first sight it looks. The electric cars are his salvation. My very first ride carried me in three quarters of an hour to a picturesque and measurably wild cañon out among the Mount Hamilton foothills east of the city. The place is a park, to be sure, but a park not yet spoiled by excessive improvement; and at such hours as I was there it proved to be by no means overrun with visitors. In it there were many birds, but nothing new.

Another car conveyed me to the foothills of the Santa Cruz Range. And this was better still, for now my walk did not end in a *cul-de-sac*, but could be continued till my legs or my watch hinted that for this time I had gone far enough. I would try the place again, I promised myself as I came away, and would provide a day for it.

This morning, therefore (March 26), after a pouring rain overnight, I boarded the car again, and at the end of the route began my day.

And I began it auspiciously; for I was hardly out of the car before a bird moved in a bush at my side, and, looking at it, I saw at once that it was a flycatcher for which I had been on the lookout, the Western flycatcher, so called. The large family to which it belongs is one of the most puzzling, and the genus *Empidonax* is far from being the easiest of the genera; but, as it happened, I knew that *Empidonax difficilis*, for all its ill-omened name, was readily distinguishable from any similar bird to be found hereabouts by its distinctly yellow under parts ; and the bird before me, face on, and close by, was a plain case, or, as it is the present fashion to say, an easy proposition.

A few rods more and I came to a cluster of small oaks, in which, on the morning previous, I had found two or three Townsend warblers (black-throated green warblers with a difference), birds that I had seen some time before among the Monterey pines at Point Pinos. With what delight I put my glass upon the first one, so bright, so handsome, so new, so suggestive of one of my dearest New England favorites, and so unexpected! After all, I believe it is the unlooked-for things that afford us the keenest pleasure, — though I may be of another mind within a week. The unexpectedness in the present case was due to nothing better than ignorance, it is true, the bird being known (by other people) to be common all winter in the Monterey region ; but that is a consideration beside the point. I followed the lovely creature, as it threaded its way among the pine leaves, with as much eagerness as if thousands of dollars had depended upon the sight. And it was well I did (blessed are the ignorant, say I); for, while I was staring at it, and a few like it that presently appeared in its company, fixing their lineaments in memory and on paper, another and much rarer bird hopped into sight: a hermit warbler; the only one I have ever seen, and, as the indications now point, the only one I am ever likely to see. He *was* a beauty, a male in full spring dress, cheeks of the brightest yellow, and throat as black as jet.[1]

Well, there were no such warblers in the trees about Congress Spring this March morning, though I scrutinized the branches in the hope of finding some. For an ornithologist is like a dog; if he has once seen a rare bird in a certain tree, he can never go by it without barking up the trunk. But a better bird than any warbler awaited me a little way ahead. There I came to a bridge over the brook, now a turbid, raging torrent, after the last night's rain; for rain, even though it comes from heaven, will make a California stream muddy. While I had stood here the day before, letting the endless flow of the water moralize my thoughts — a "priestlike task" at which nothing in nature is more efficient, — a dark-colored bird flew out from under the bridge close to the water, anon dropped into it, swam, or was carried by it, a yard or two, took wing again, again dropped into the current, and then came to rest upon a rock on the water's edge. There it stood for half an hour, a great part of the time on one leg, preening its feathers, yawning, and, what was worth all the rest, winking, till its eye looked like the revolving lamp of a lighthouse, I said to myself. At last, when I was growing weary, it all at once gave signs of nervousness, and the next moment was on the wing and out of sight. A water-ouzel, as the reader knows.

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[1] Since then I have seen many hermit warblers, in the Yosemite, where they breed, and in my own Santa Barbara dooryard where they were present in goodly numbers, as they were throughout the city, in May, 1912, — a great surprise, and as far as my knowledge extends, a state of things before unheard of.

There would be no such fortune for me this morning, I knew well enough as I approached the bridge; but anyhow I must stay a bit, admiring the rush of the water, and the ferns of various sorts that draped the tall, vertical cliff on the farther side. And lo, while I was thus engaged, my ears caught the ouzel's note. He was at that very moment dropping into the stream under my eyes. Another instant, and he was out again, and in two seconds more he was gone. What a sprite! A bird with none like him. So commonplace an exterior, and, as it surely seems, so romantic a soul, vitality incarnate, the very soul of the mountain brook. If only he would have sung for me!

One thing I must mention. I had never noticed till yesterday that, in addition to his bobbing or nodding habit, he practices sometimes a teeter of the hinder parts, after the manner of the spotted sandpiper and the water-thrush. And, seeing it, I wondered again, what connection, if any, there can be between life about the edges of moving, rippling water and this wave-like seesaw.

Along the road I was following, which itself followed the course of the brook, — since it is part of a river's business to show surveyors the way, — were trees, shrubs, and ground flowers, all interesting, and nearly all of kinds new to the Eastern traveler. I looked with pleasure, as I had done before, at alder trees (plain alder, for certain, bark, leaf, and fruit all telling the same story) sixty feet or more in height, and as large as good-sized New England beeches, to which, as one looks at their trunks, they bear no small resemblance.

Tanbark oaks were here, — now and then a truly magnificent specimen, — redwoods, of course, sycamores, maples, of a kind for which I had no name,[1] madroñas, now in full bloom

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[1] Big-leaf maple, *Acer macrophyllum*, as I have learned since.

(tall, red-barked trees, bearing the blossoms of a blueberry-bush!), and bays, also in bloom, with the glossy leaves of which I was continually setting my nose on fire. "Very good to inhale," a young man tells me, when I meet him in the road and speak to him about the size and beauty of the trees. I had thought only of *smelling* them. "Very good" they must be, if pungency be the size and measure of beneficence.

Of course, in this strange land, a man, especially a man with no manual of the local botany, must have his curiosity piqued by a world of things as to the identity, or even the relationship, of which he cannot form so much as a plausible conjecture. Here, for instance, is a low shrub, at this moment in bloom. It looks like nothing that I have ever seen, and I can only pass it by. Here, on the other hand, is another low, waist-high shrub that has the appearance of a birch; and such it is, for a smell of the inner bark is proof conclusive. But what kind of birch? And at my feet are shining green leaves that prophesy of something, I have no notion what.

By and by I come to a place where in the shadow of thick trees a dainty white violet is growing. This I have seen before. *Viola Beckwithii*, mountain heart's-ease, Miss Parsons's "Wild Flowers of California," a book to which

I have been much indebted, enables me to call it. And the sight reminds me that I have yet to see a blue violet on the Pacific coast, though I have seen at least three kinds of yellow ones.

As I approach a house a splendid dark-blue jay shows itself. One of the royal birds; a pretty strict forester, one would imagine it ought to be; but it seems plain, from what I have remarked here as well as elsewhere, that it finds something to its advantage in the neighborhood of man. I am always ready for another look at it. Such depth and richness of color, and so imposing a topknot! I recall the excitement of my first meeting with one of its brothers, the long-crested, at the Grand Cañon in December last. Many new birds I have seen since then, but few to give me keener pleasure.

Another stretch of woods, and I am near another house. And outside the fence, reclining in the sun, is the lord of the manor, a shaggy German, with whom I pass the time of day — though the time of day might seem to be about the last thing to interest a man so profitably employed. A cat lies stretched out in the grass beside him. Yesterday he had a dog for company. Cats and dogs alike have a special fondness for the society of lazy people, I believe.

Still another half-mile of forest, and I come upon a Swede mending the road. How soft and pleasant a voice he has! And how friendly a smile! I love to meet with such a neighbor in a lonely place, and as I pass on I fall to wondering how it is that all these foreigners, as a rule, seem to have a touch of civility that lies beyond the reach of my brother Americans. Politeness, suavity, gentleness of manner, mildness of tone, friendliness of expression — in all these qualities the men from over seas appear to excel us. It was only an hour ago, while I stood on the bridge, watching the ouzel, that a young man, foreign-born, though of what nationality I did not make out, stopped to ask a question about the electric car. Even now I can hear his agreeable voice and the good-bye, like a word of grace, with which, after an acquaintance of two minutes, he took his leave.

Yet I must tell the truth. The only man who has been rude to me in California, where I have been wandering about by myself in all sorts of places, on an errand that must have been a mystery to many, was a foreigner, a Teuton. *He*, indeed, went so far as to threaten personal violence, with something like murder in his eye; all because, in utter innocence, I had stood for a few minutes a hundred yards or more from his shanty of a house, quite outside the fence, level-ing my small field-glass upon a flock of sparrows feeding there on the ground. I might go somewhere else with my telescope, he said, when I tried to explain what I was doing. He was n't going to stand it. His dog, meanwhile, was setting him a Christian example; for in response to a coaxing gesture he had ventured up, and was licking my hand. Possibly I made matters worse by remarking, "Your *dog* seems very *friendly*," though I did not go so far as to quote the saying of the French cynic — if he was French — that the more he saw of men, the better he thought of dogs.

But that was months ago, on the outskirts of San Diego, and might never have been brought again to mind but for the praise of foreigners into which I have unwittingly fallen.

Nearly or quite all the residents of this Santa Cruz mountain region (for the little distance that I have gone, that is to say) seem to be men from the old countries. The last one with whom I spoke to-day was a Frenchman. He had been here more than forty years, he said.

The interview began by his appearing at the door and calling out cheerily, "Well, won't you have some more apples?"

"No, I thank you," I answered.

But he persisted, "Oh, come in, and have some."

I had begged the favor of two or three the day before, to piece out the slender luncheon I had brought along. So I went in, and we chatted awhile, he most cheerfully, as proud of California and "these mountains" as if he had been born to their inheritance. I was starting homeward in a few days, I remarked.

"Oh, then you don't like this country," he said, in a tone of mingled surprise and sorrow.

Yes, indeed, I assured him; I liked it much; oh, very much; but then, I had not come here with any idea of remaining. He was comforted, I thought, and we parted on the best of terms.

"I am French, you know," he said; and I answered, "Yes." He had been jabbering in that tongue with a pretty young woman (Mary, he called her) who had dropped in for a minute or two on her way to the village.

After this I had interviews with sundry birds and flowers, but there is no space in which to tell of them; and, specialist though I am, especially when in new places, I shall remember longest, it may be, a Frenchman, a Swede, and a man of unknown race with whom I have to-day passed kindly words among "these mountains." For, after all, a man, if he be halfway decent and reasonable, is of more value than many sparrows.

READING A CHECK-LIST

MANY literary men have been given to reading in dictionaries. The articles are brief, but full of substance, and by no means so disconnected as they look. One continually suggests another, and as a man whose business is with words follows the trail of these suggestions, turning the big book over, a half-hour will pass almost before he knows it. And in that time he may have gathered more information worth keeping than twice the same time devoted to the casualties of a newspaper would have been likely to furnish.

So a student of birds may spend many a profitable season, longer or shorter, in rummaging over the A. O. U. Check-List. The initial stands for the American Ornithologists' Union, and the latest edition of the book was published in 1910. We had waited for it impatiently, so many things had happened during the fifteen years since the second edition was issued, and on having it in hand we hastened to look it through from cover to cover.

Errors and omissions were noted with a measure of innocently malicious satisfaction; for as a matter of course, if we happened to have lived in some out-of-the-way corner, we had collected certain bits of local knowledge which the learned compilers of the work had overlooked, or never possessed — or, conceivably, had considered too unimportant for mention. But our main interest just now was in marking changes and additions. Here a subspecies, too hastily made (naming a new bird is one of the roads to glory, "and many there be that find it"), had been cast out as unworthy, fuller information having shown that it graded too closely into another form. Here a new subspecies had been accepted, or put on probation, as valid, or likely to prove so. And here, there, and everywhere, alas and alas, old familiar scientific names, so called, had given place to new, till we groaned in spirit and were ready to declare that it was only the nicknames, "trivial" names, common names, vulgar names (belittle them how you will), that stood any chance of holding their own, and therefore were worth retaining in the memory.

But all these technical details having been noted, and the volume set in its place on the shelf, it still serves what we may almost call its best use — as a book to read in at odd times.

You have an idle five minutes while waiting (patiently, of course) for breakfast or luncheon.

Take down the Check-List and open it at random. You are pretty sure to strike something worth while, something that will at least administer a fillip to the imagination or the memory. Here, for instance, is Trudeau's tern. What about it? You have never seen one, for you have no collection, and even if you had, seeing a bird's skin is hardly to be accepted as seeing the bird. And you read that its home is on the southern coast of South America, that it breeds in Argentina, and that it has twice been found in the United States, once on Long Island and once (where the type specimen was taken — the bird, that is, from which the species was originally described and named) at Great Egg Harbor, New Jersey.

It is among the possibilities, your pardon being begged, and ours being a sizable country, that you have never so much as heard of Great Egg Harbor; but henceforth, if your memory is anything like Macaulay's, the name will have a certain interest for you. "Great Egg Harbor?" you will say, if you chance to read of a murder or a robbery committed thereabout (such cheerful events being the staple of telegraphic news), "Great Egg Harbor, New Jersey? Oh yes, that's where the first Trudeau tern known to science, was captured, in 1838." And perhaps, though I suppose this is hardly to be expected, (newspaper readers' time being precious), you will be at the trouble to look up the place on the map — a little south of Atlantic City, a pleasure resort which every one, even a Californian, who has so many excellent resorts of his own, may be presumed to have heard of.

But what a distance for a bird, even for such a swift one, to have strayed from home! From Argentina to New Jersey — and that only to be "collected." Poor bird! A Captain Cook among terns. But what a crowning bit of luck for Mr. Audubon!

Another day, and the book falls open of its own accord at page 184. You are among the kingfishers. One of them (there are only three in North America, though there are a hundred and fifty in the world), has what you have always thought about the most beautiful of all scientific names, *Ceryle alcyon.* Who could imagine anything prettier, or better-sounding. *Ceryle alcyon!* It falls from the tongue like music, and suggests the fairest of weather.

But you are chiefly concerned just now with another one, *Ceryle americana septentrionalis.* Not so poetical an appellation by a good deal, nor, to your North American ears, so very appropriate, since the bird, so far from being a peculiarly Northern species, finds its northern limit in the southernmost corner of the United States. No matter for that, however. You know the reason of the name, and acknowledge it a sound one. What you are thinking of now is not the name, but the bird itself, and the bright Texas day on which you saw it.

You had sauntered a few miles out of the city of San Antonio, spying to right and left for new birds in that, to you, new part of the world, when suddenly, up a little shaded brook, sitting on a low branch overhanging the water, you beheld this lovely little kingfisher. What a treat it was to your eyes! How glossy were its green feathers! And what a wide-awake, businesslike air it had!

That was many years ago, as years are beginning to be reckoned in your lessening calendar, and you have never seen one since. But reading these few words about it here in the Check-List brings the whole delightful scene before you almost as fresh as new. Memory is among the most precious of an old man's treasures.

Again you turn the leaves. You are nearer the end of the book this time, among the warblers, and near the top of the right-hand page are the words, like magic in their effect: "Black-throated Green Warbler." You have not seen the wearer of that name for three years, but if it were ten times as long, you could still see it plainly. Well as you know it, however, you had forgotten what a traveler it has been found to be. A bird of the Eastern States, you would have said; but the Check-List tells you that it breeds as far west as Minnesota, and has been known to wander to "Arizona, Greenland, and Europe": and you recall (an event too recent for record in the Check-List) that a friend has told you of having taken one within a few months on the Farallon Islands! Think of that for a bird so small, and, as you would have thought, from all you have seen of it, so little enterprising.

The frail thing must have strayed far out of its course while migrating, and then been caught in a gale, you suppose, and swept out on the Pacific. There, hard beset and ready to perish, it descried a rock jutting up out of the wilderness of water, and with a grateful heart dropped down upon it, safe at last — only to have its life blown out by this devotee of science.

The Farallon Islands, Greenland, and Europe! Strange over-sea and cross-country journeyings, surely, for our little four- or five-inch warbler. As you think of it, you can see its black throat and golden cheeks, and hear again that most musically hoarse, drowsy voice repeating, out of the top of a tall Massachusetts pine, "Trees, trees, murmuring trees."

You can even remember the very clump of evergreens, in what is now part of the Arnold Arboretum, under which you first heard it, not knowing, nor being able to discover, who its author was. A brook trickled along the foot of the hill, and there you stayed evening after evening to listen to the sweet song of the veery. You recall, too, your satisfaction, a few years afterward, in printing in a good place your version of the warbler's tune, a version which you were young enough, and simple enough, to hope might be kept in remembrance.

Well, that was long ago, and whether any one else remembers it or not, it pleases you now to say it over to yourself, as you seem once more to hear the bird saying it, "Trees, trees, murmuring trees." Yes, yes, there is much good literature in the Check-List. For the right reader, and at the right time, its briefest prose may turn to poetry.

And now did you ever hear of Piddletown, Dorsetshire, England? Ten to one you never did. Yet here in the Check-List you may learn that, surprising as it sounds, it holds a small but not unimportant place in the annals of American ornithology. Our North American bittern, one of the most original of characters, a pretty strict recluse, but, when in the mood for it, making noise enough for two or three, was named from a specimen taken in that English village (or city, or hamlet, whichever it is) almost a hundred years ago. How it came to be so far from home is a puzzle, — to you, at any rate, — as it is, likewise, how the species had so long eluded scientific description. Of all places in the world, that our queer old stakedriver and pumper, after lifting up its hollow, far-sounding voice in our grassy American meadows from time immemorial, should have been obliged to go to Piddletown, England, for its christening!

A Boston deacon, a devout and, better still, a good man, once remarked to his Sunday-school class (I can hear his voice now, after more than forty years), "There's a lot of good reading in John," meaning in the Gospel that, rightly or wrongly, passes under the name of that favorite disciple. And so, I repeat, there's plenty of good reading in the Check-List.

Once more (for in this alluring and easy kind of study your "finallies" and "lastlies" and "in conclusions" are liable to be as many as tailed out those long-winded, old-fashioned sermons to which you listened, if you did listen, in your childhood, while the enviable man seated at the "head of the pew" was happily lost in a doze) — once more, I say, but the once may run into twice or thrice, here is the yellow-billed magpie. You remember, and think of it often, the long sunny day that you spent in pursuit of the bird down in the beautiful Carmel Valley, near Monterey; but you have never noticed till this minute that the type of the species was taken here at Santa Barbara seventy-five years ago. You wonder how long it is since the last one was seen in this neighborhood. There is nothing of the kind here now, unless it be on the other side of the mountains, a long distance from the city itself; so much you can vouch for. First and last you have seen a good many from car-windows in riding up and down the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, but you have never seen nor heard of one in Santa Barbara. It is a good bird to see anywhere, a bird of a most remarkably restricted range (like the Florida jay — and *not* like the black-throated green warbler), being found in a certain small section of California and nowhere else in the world. You are pleased to know that Audubon named it (after his friend Nuttall — *Pica nuttalli*) from an example taken in this most delightful of California places.

Few birds but possess some interesting peculiarity. This magpie is not the only one that had its scientific birth in Santa Barbara. The tricolored blackbird is another. This you have now and then seen here, though it is hardly to be accounted common; one of the most taking members of its genus, with a startling snow-white patch on its glossy jet-black wing. The white-winged blackbird you have always felt like calling it. You will never read its name (the bird's third color is red) without remembering your first sight and sound of it (the first sound especially) in a dense clump of tall reeds, out of which came a most unearthly chorus of cat-like yawlings. "Something new!" you exclaimed, and after a little patient waiting you saw the blackbird signed with those impressive white wing-marks. Yes, indeed, something new, and something of the best.

Suffer me to say once more, and this time "finally and in conclusion," for the right man there's a world of good reading in a Check-List.

ON FOOT IN THE YOSEMITE

WHEN flocks of wild geese light in the Yosemite, Mr. Muir tells us, they have hard work to find their way out again. Whatever direction they take, they are soon stopped by the wall, the height of which they seem to have an insuperable difficulty in gauging. There is something mysterious about it, they must think. The rock looks to be only about so high, but when they should be flying far over its top, northward or southward as the season may be, here they are once more beating against its stony face; and only when, in their bewilderment, they chance to follow the downward course of the river, do they hit upon an exit.

Their case is not peculiar. Dr. Bunnell, in his interesting account of the discovery of the Valley, describes the ludicrous guesses of his companions and himself as to the height of the rock known since that day as El Capitan. One "official" estimated it at four hundred feet. A bolder spirit guessed eight hundred, while Dr. Bunnell, waxing very courageous, raised the figure to fifteen hundred. The real height is thirty-three hundred feet. The fact seems to be that the eyes of men and geese alike are unaccustomed to such perpendicular altitudes. A mountain three thousand feet high is a thing to which they are more or less used, but a vertical surface of anything like the same elevation stands far outside of all ordinary experience. El Capitan is nothing but a cliff, and a cliff — well, any goose knows what a cliff is like. Rise about so far, and you are over it.

For myself, I sympathize with the geese. The rock was in sight from my tent-door for eight weeks, and grand as it was at first, and grander still as it became, I could never make it look half a mile high. It was especially alluring to me in the evening twilight. At that hour, the day's tramp over, I loved to lie back in my camp-chair and look and look at its noble outline against the bright western sky. Professor Whitney says that it can be seen from the San Joaquin Valley, fifty or sixty miles away; but I am now farther away than that several times over, and I can see it at this minute with all distinctness — not only the rock itself, but the loose fringe of low trees along its top, with the afterglow shining through them. There would be comparatively little profit in traveling if we could see things only so long as we remain within sight of them.

Comparatively little profit, I say; but in absolute terms a great profit, nevertheless, for any man who is an adept in the art of living, wise enough to value not only his life, but the days of his life. It is something to spend a happy hour, a happy week or month, though that were to be the end of it. And such a two months as I spent in the Yosemite! Let what will happen to me henceforth, so much at least I have enjoyed. Even if I should never think of the place again, though memory should fail me altogether, those eight weeks were mine. While they lasted I lived and was happy. Six o'clock every morning saw me at the breakfast-table, and half an hour later, with bread in my pocket, I was on the road, head in air, stepping briskly for warmth, and singing with myself over the anticipation of new adventures. I might be heading for Eagle Peak or Nevada Fall, for Glacier Point, or where not. What matter? Here was another day of Sierra sunlight and Sierra air, in which to look and look, and listen and listen, and play with my thoughts and dreams. Who was it that said, "Take care of the days, and life will take care of itself?" Others, men and women, old and young, were setting forth on the same holiday errand; as we met or passed each other we exchanged cheerful greetings; but for my part I was always alone, and, let it sound how it will, I liked my company.

Such a feast of walking as the two months gave me! I shall never have another to compare with it. The Valley itself is four thousand feet above sea-level, and many of my jaunts took me nearly or quite as much higher. If the trails were steep, the exhilaration was so much the greater. At the worst I had only to stop a minute or two now and then to breathe and look about me, upward or downward, or across the way. There might be a bird near by, a solitaire by good luck, or a mountain quail; or two or three fox sparrows[1] might be singing gayly from the chaparral; or as many pigeons might go by me along the mountain-side, speeding like the wind; or, not improbably, a flock of big black swifts would be doubling and turning in crazy, lightning-like zigzags over my head. Who would not pause a minute to confer with strangers of such quality? And if attractions of this more animated kind failed, there would likely enough be broad acres of densely growing manzanita bushes on either side of the way, every one of the million branches hanging full of tiny bells, graceful in shape as

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[1] These must be Mr. Muir's "song sparrows," I suppose, since, strangely enough, no kind of song sparrow, properly so called, has ever been reported from the Valley.

Grecian urns, tinted like the pinkest and loveliest of seashells, and fragrant with a reminiscence of the sweetest of all blossoms, our darling Plymouth mayflower. Yes, indeed, there was always plenty of excuse for a breathing spell.

I began with reasonable moderation, remembering my years. For two or three days I confined my steps to the valley-level; walking to Mirror Lake, whither every one goes, though mostly not on foot, to see the famous reflections in its unruffled surface just before the sunrise; to the foot of Yosemite Fall, or as near it as might be without a drenching; and down the dusty road to Capitan bridge and the Bridal Veil.

For the time I was contented to *look* up, pitching my walk low but my prospect high, as some old poet said. For that, the cliffs, the falls, and the wonderful pines, cedars, and firs, many of them approaching two hundred feet in height, afforded continual inducement. Sentinel Rock loomed immediately behind my tent, a flat, thin, upright slab, — so it looks at a front view, — for all the world like some ancient giant's gravestone, three thousand feet in height. It was the first thing I saw every morning as I glanced up through the ventilator in the gable at the head of my bed, and the first thing that I thought of one night when an earthquake rocked me out of my sleep.

Eagle Peak, nearly four thousand feet above the Valley, peeping over the heads of its two younger brothers, was directly opposite as I stood in my door; while I had only to move out of the range of a group of pine trees to see the greatest (at that season) of the four principal falls: the Yosemite, that is to say, with its first stupendous free plunge of fifteen or sixteen hundred feet, a height equal (so my Yankee-bred imagination dealt with the matter) to that of six or seven Bunker Hill monuments standing end on end. It was grandeur itself to look at, — grandeur and beauty combined; and to my unaccustomed ears what a noise it made! As I started out for my first stroll, on the noon of my arrival (May 11), a black cloud overspread the sky in that quarter, from which came at intervals a heavy rumbling as of not very distant thunder. A passer-by, however, when I questioned him about it, said, "No, it is the fall."

And so it proved, some momentary shifting of the wind seeming now and then to lift the enormous column of water from the cliff, and anon let it down again with a resounding crash. This peculiar thundering sound, I was told, would be less frequent later in the season, when the warmer days would melt the mountain snow more rapidly, and the bulk of the water would be so increased that no ordinary wind could lift it. This, also, was shown to be correct, unreasonable as it had sounded, — the more water, the less noise. And after all, when I came to consider the subject, it was only giving a new twist to an old proverb, "Still waters run deep."

My first considerable climb was an unpremeditated trip to the top of Nevada Fall. I took the trail at the head of the Valley, close by the Happy Isles, some three miles from camp, with no intention of doing more than try what it might be like; but an upward-leading path is of itself an eloquent, almost irresistible, persuasion, and, one turn after another, I kept on, the ravishing wildness of the Merced Cañon, and the sight and sound of the Merced River raging among the rocks, getting more and more hold upon me, till all at once the winding path made a short descent, and behold, I was on a bridge over the river; and yonder, all unexpected, only a little distance up the foaming rapids, through the loveliest vista of sombre evergreens and bright, newly leaved, yellow-green maples, was a fall, far less high than the Yosemite, to be sure, but even more graceful in its proportions (breadth and height being better related), and so wondrously set or framed

VERNAL FALL, YOSEMITE VALLEY
Mr. Torrey with a Friend on the Bridge

that no words could begin to intimate its beauty. I looked and looked (but half the time I must be attending to the mad rush of the river under my feet), and then started on. If this was Vernal Fall, as to which, in my happy ignorance, I was a little uncertain, then I must go far enough to see the Nevada.

The trail carried me about and about, past big snowbanks and along the edge of flowery slopes, with ever-shifting views of the mighty cañon and the lofty cliffs beyond, till after what may have been an hour's work it brought me out upon a mountain shoulder whence I looked straight away to another fall, higher and wilder by much than the one I had lately seen. Here, then, was the Nevada, to many minds the grandest of the great four, as in truth it must be, taking the months together.

Now there was nothing for it, after a few minutes of hesitation (still considering my years), but I must keep on, down to the river-level again, after all this labor in getting above it, and over another bridge, till a final breathless, sharper and sharper zigzag brought me to the top, where I stood gazing from above at an indescribable, unimaginable sight, — the plunge of the swollen river over a sheer precipice to a huddle of broken rocks six hundred feet below.

I happened to be fresh from a few days at Niagara, and, moreover, I was a man who had all his life taken blame to himself as being unwarrantably, almost disgracefully, insensible to the charm of falling water. Nobody would ever stand longer than I to muse upon a brook idling through meadows or gurgling over pebbles down a gentle slope; and the narrower it was, the better it was, almost, given only some fair measure of clearness, movement enough to lend it here and there an eddying dimple, and, most of all, a look of being perennial. I hold in loving recollection two or three such modest streamlets, and at this very minute can seem to see and hear them, dipping smoothly over certain well-remembered flat boulders, and bearing down a few tufts of wavering sweet-flag leaves. Yes, I see them with all plainness, though the breadth of a continent stretches between them and this present dwelling-place of mine, where near mountains half circle me about and the Pacific surf dashes almost against my doorstep, but where there is never a sound of running water all the long summer through. Often and often I say to myself, "If there were only one dear Massachusetts brook, to make the charm complete!"

But with all this, as I say, I had always, to my own surprise, made strangely small account of our boasted New England cataracts; pleasant to look upon they might be, no doubt, but hardly worth much running after. And now these falls of the Merced and its larger tributaries had taken me by storm. Indeed they are altogether another story; as little to be compared with anything in New Hampshire as Flagstaff Hill on Boston Common is to be set beside Mount Washington. Merely a difference in degree? Yes, if you choose to put it so; but such a difference in degree as amounts fairly to a difference in kind. Imagine the Merrimac tumbling over the face of a ledge five hundred, six hundred, fifteen hundred feet high! And the Yosemite Fall, be it remembered, after its first plunge of fifteen or sixteen hundred feet, makes at once two others of four hundred and six hundred feet respectively. In other words, it drops almost plumb from an altitude nearly as great (as great within six hundred feet) as that of the summit of Mount Lafayette above the level of Profile Notch. And furthermore, it is to be considered that the water does not slip over the edge of the awful cliff, but comes to it at headlong speed, foaming white, having been crowded together and rounded up between the rocky walls of its steep and narrow bed, exactly as the Niagara River is in the rapids above the whirlpool, — which rapids are to my apprehension, as I suppose they are to most men's, hardly a whit less astounding than the Horseshoe Fall itself.

This wild outward leap it was that most of all impressed me when more than once I stood at the top of the Yosemite Fall, amazed and silent. But that was some time later than the day now spoken of, and must be left for mention in its turn.

I had heard before coming to the Valley, and many times since, that the one place excelling all others — of those, that is to say, immediately above the Valley wall, and so falling within the range of ordinary pedestrians and horseback riders — was Glacier Point; and now, having given my legs and wind a pretty good preliminary test, I inquired of the camp-manager how difficult the trail to that point might be, as compared with the one I had just gone over.

"I should call it twice as difficult," he said, "though not so long."

The answer surprised, and for the moment almost disheartened me. Age was never so inopportune, I thought.

"But anyhow," said I, "there is no law against my having a look at the beginning of the way and judging of its possibilities for myself."

And the very next morning, being apparently in good bodily trim, and certainly in good spirits, I made an early start. The trail offered at least one advantage: it began at my door, with no six miles of superfluous Valley road such as the previous day's jaunt had burdened me with. As for its unbroken steepness, that, I reasoned with myself, was to be overcome by the simple expedient of taking it in short steps at a slow pace.

Well, not to boast of what is not at all boastworthy (Mr. Galen Clark, ninety-five years old, — may God bless him, he was always showing me kindness, — had made the descent unaccompanied the season before, though you would never hear him tell of it), I reached the Point in slow time, but without fatigue, the hours having been enlivened by the frequent presence of some jovial members of the California Press Club, trailing one behind another, who by turns overtook and were overtaken by me (the tortoise having sometimes the better of it for a little), till every fresh encounter became matter for a jest. We arrived in company, cutting across lots over the hard snow near the top, and then there was no taking of no for an answer. Three of the men were set upon going out upon the celebrated overhanging rock — three thousand feet, more or less, over empty space — to be photographed, and, would he or would n't he, the old "Professor," as with friendly impudence, meaning no disrespect, they had dubbed him, must go along and have his picture taken with the rest. And go along the old professor did, keeping, to be sure, at a prudent remove from the dizzy edge, though he flattered himself, of course, that only for not choosing to play the fool, he *could* stand as near it as the next man. This pleasing ceremony done with, I was left to go my own gait, and then my enjoyment of the marvelous place began.

A good-natured and conversable young driver, who had picked me up one day on the road, quizzed me as to what I thought about the origin of the Valley; and after I had tried to set forth in outline the two principal opinions of geologists upon the subject, not understanding them any too well myself, and not suspecting what a philosopher I had to do with, he informed me that he took no stock in either of them. He cared nothing for Whitney or Le Conte or Muir. No subsidence theory or glacial theory for him. *He* believed that the place was made so to start with, on purpose that people might come from all parts of the world and enjoy it. And to-day, as I moved about the rim of Glacier Point for the first time, I was ready to say with equal positiveness, if with something less of serious intention, — This place was made for prospects.

If I doubted, I had only to look at the level green valley, with the green river meandering through it; at the wall opposite, so variously grand and beautiful, from El Capitan to the Half Dome; and, best of all, at the Merced Cañon, as seen from the neighborhood of the hotel, with my two falls of the day before in full sight across it, and beyond them a world of snowy peaks, a good half of the horizon studded with them, lonely-looking though so many, and stretching away and away and away, till they faded into the invisible; a magnificent panorama of the high Sierras, minarets and domes, obelisks and battlemented walls; such a spectacle as I had never thought to look upon. It was too bad I could not spend the night with it, to see it in other moods; but when I was informed that the hotel would be open before many days, I consoled myself with the promise of another and longer visit.

I was better than my word. Four times afterward I climbed to the Point, once by the "long trail," *via* Nevada Fall (which, with the afternoon descent over the short trail added, really made some approximation to a day's work), and altogether I passed six nights there, taking in the splendors of the dawn and the sunset, and, for the rest, ranging more or less about the inviting snowy woods. One afternoon (May 23) we were favored with a lively snow-storm of several hours' duration, with a single tremendous thunder-clap in the midst, which drove three young fellows into the hotel-office breathless with a tale of how the lightning had played right about their heads till almost they gave themselves up for dead men; and when the clouds broke away little by little shortly before sunset, the shifting views of the cañon, the falls, and the mountain summits near and far, were such as put one or two amateur photographers fairly beside themselves, and drove the rest of us to silence or to rapturous exclamation according as the powers had made us of the quiet or the noisy kind. Whatever we poor mortals made of it, it was a wondrous show.

Thrice I went to the top of Sentinel Dome (eighty-one hundred feet), an easy jaunt from the hotel, though just at this time, while attempting it in treacherous weather, with the trail, if there be one, buried under the winter snow, a young tourist became bewildered and lost his life — vanished utterly, as if the earth had swallowed him. The prospect from the summit is magnificent, if inferior, as I think it is, to that from the hotel piazza; and the place itself is good to stand on: one of those symmetrical, broadly rounded, naked granite domes, so highly characteristic of the Sierras, and of which so many are to be seen from any point upon the Valley rim. Some agency or other, once having the pattern, seems to have turned them out by the score.

One day I looked down into the Fissures, so called, giddy, suicide-provoking rents; and more than once, on the Wawona road, I skirted two of those beautiful Sierra Nevada meadows, so feelingly celebrated by Mr. Muir, and so surprising and grateful to all new-comers in these parts. At this moment one of them was starred with thousands of greenish-white marsh marigolds — *Caltha leptosepala*, as I learned afterward to call them, when good Mr. Clark produced, out of his treasures new and old, for my enlightenment, a much-desiderated copy of Brewer and Watson's "Botany of California."

After the two trails thus "negotiated," to speak a little in the Western manner, there remained one that by all accounts was steeper and harder still, the trail to Yosemite Point, or, if the walker should elect to travel its full length, to Eagle Peak. As to the Peak, I doubted. The tale of miles sounded long, and as the elevation was only seventy-eight hundred feet, substantially the same as that of Glacier Point, it appeared questionable whether the distance would pay for itself.

"Oh, the trail is n't difficult," a neighborly-minded, middle-aged tourist had assured me (he spoke of the trail to Yosemite Point only); "we made it between breakfast and luncheon."

But they had made it on horseback, as came out a minute later, which somewhat weakened the argument. Difficult or easy, however (and if there had been forty, or even twenty, less years in my pack, all this debate concerning distances and grades would have been ridiculous), to Yosemite Point I was determined to go. Once, at least, I must stand upon the rocks at the top of that stupendous fall, at which I had spent so many happy half-hours in gazing. And stand there I did, not once, but thrice; and except for the Glacier Point outlook, which must always rank first, I enjoyed no other Yosemite experience quite so much. So I speak; yet sometimes, while loitering downward in the late afternoon, I sang another song. "After all," I thought, "these are the best hours." And really there is no reaching any final verdict in matters of this nature, so much depending upon mood and circumstance.

I was walking in the shade of a vertical cliff so near, so high, so overpowering in its enormous proportions, that I often felt it to be more impressive than El Capitan itself; and, walking thus in deep shadow, I looked out upon a world of bright sunlight: the fall at my side ("Oh, I say," an enthusiastic, much-traveled man had exclaimed in my hearing, "it beats Niagara. Yes, sir, it beats Niagara!"), every turn of the path bringing it into view at a new angle, and, as it seemed, to increased advantage; the shining green Valley, with its jewel of a river; and yonder, up in the sky, all those illuminated snowy Sierra peaks. Well, I could only stop and look, and stop and look again, rejoicing to be alive.

As for Eagle Peak, with its two or three extra miles, before the business was over (after the way thither became dry enough to be passable without wading) I had paid it four visits. The Peak itself offered no transcendent attraction, but the trail proved to be at once so comfortable and so very much to my mind, that, once at the end of the sharp zigzags, and on the level of the river above the fall, it seemed impossible not to keep on, — just this once more, I always promised myself; such pleasure I took in the forest of stately pines and firs, the multitude of wild flowers by the way, and in another and more extensive of those fair mountain meadows (natural grassy meads, green as emerald, shining in the sun amidst the dark evergreen forest), along the border of which the winding trail carried me. In this were no marsh marigolds, but instead a generous sprinkling of sunbright buttercups, while a pool in the midst was covered with lily-pads and yellow spatter-dock lilies, — old New England friends whose homely faces were trebly welcome in these far-off California altitudes.

I never approached the meadow — which melting snowbanks all about still rendered impossible of dry-shod exploration — without pleasing anticipation of deer. They must frequent it I thought; but I looked for them in vain. The curiously distinctive slow drum-taps of an invisible Williamson sapsucker, a true Sierran, handsomest of the handsome, were always to be counted upon; swallows and swifts went skimming over the grass; robins and snowbirds flitted about; but if deer ever came this way, it was not down in the books for me to find them.

At the end of the trail, after a tedious gravelly slope, where I remember a close bed of the pretty mountain phlox, with thin remnants of a snowdrift no more than a rod or two above it, there remained a brief clamber over huge boulders, with tufts of gorgeous pink pentstemon growing in such scanty deposits of coarse soil as the desolate, unpromising situation afforded, — the scantier the better, as it seemed, for this clever economist is a lover of rocks if ever there was one. It was to be found in all directions, in the Valley and on the heights, but never anywhere except in the most inhospitable-looking, impossible-looking of stony places. And out of a few grains of powdered granite it manages somehow to extract the wherewithal not merely upon which to subsist, but for the putting-forth of as bright a profusion of exquisite bloom as the sun ever shone upon.

The outlook from the topmost boulder of this Titan's cairn, for it looked like nothing else, was commanding, — valley, river, and mountain, — but to me, as I have said, the Peak was mainly of use as the conclusion of a walk through an enchanting Sierra forest; for I, no less than my fellows, have yet to outgrow the primitive need of "a place to go to," even when I go mostly for what is to be enjoyed by the way.

So much for what might be more strictly accounted as climbs to the valley rim. More wearisome, perhaps, because quite as long, while without the counterbalancing stimulation which a mountain trail seems always, out of its own virtue, to communicate, were an indefinite number of jaunts to Inspiration Point (hateful name!) and into the forest a mile or two beyond.

Precisely why I expended so much labor upon the long miles of this dusty uphill road, it might be troublesome to determine; but here, also, there were so many things to be looked at, and so many others to be hoped for, that the going thither about once in so many days grew little by little into something like a habit. Between the moist river-bank and the dry hillside, what a procession of beautiful and interesting wild flowers the progress of the season led before me! And if many of them seemed to be the same as I had known in the East, they were certain to be the same with a difference: dogwood and azalea (blossom-laden azalea hedges by the mile); tall columbines and lilies; yellow violets and blue larkspurs; salmon-berry and mariposa tulips; an odd-looking dwarf convolvulus, not observed elsewhere; the famous blood-red snow-plant, which there was reported to be a heavy fine for picking; and whole gardens of tiny, high-colored, fairylike blossoms, kind after kind and color after color, growing mostly in separate parterres, "ground-flowers in flocks," and veritable gems for brightness, over which, in my ignorance, I could only stand and wonder.

Of birds, as compared with plants, the walk might offer little in the line of novelty, but such as it did offer, taking old and new together, they were always enough to keep a man alive; a pair of golden eagles, for instance, soaring in the blue, —a display of aviation, as we say in these progressive days, fitted to provoke the most earth-bound spirit to envy; a pair of violet-green swallows, loveliest of the swallow tribe, never so busy, hastening in and out of an old woodpecker's hole in a stunted wayside oak; tiny hummingbirds, of course, by name Calliope, wearing the daintiest of fan-shaped, cherry-colored gorgets, true mountaineers, every soul of them, fearless of frost and snow, if only the manzanita bells would hold out; and, in particular, a sooty grouse, who nearly put my neck out of joint before — after a good half-hour, at least — I finally caught sight of him as he hitched about in his leafy hiding-place near the top of a tall pine tree, complaining by the hour. *Boom, boom, boom, boo-boom, boom, boom,* so the measure ran, with that odd grace note invariably preceding the fourth syllable, as if it were a point of conscience with the performer that it should stand just there and nowhere else. A forlorn, moping kind of amorous ditty, it sounded to me; most unmusical, most melancholy, though perhaps I had no call to criticize.

"Hark, from the pines a doleful sound,
My ears attend the cry," —

so my old-fashioned, orthodox memory fell to repeating, while the hollow, sepulchral notes grew fainter and fainter with distance as I walked

6

away. Yet I might appropriately enough have envied the fellow his altitudinous position, if nothing else, remembering how grand and almost grown-up a certain small Massachusetts boy used to feel as he surveyed the world from a perch not half so exalted, in what to his eyes was about the tallest pine tree in the world, up in his father's pasture.

The most curiously unique of Yosemite plants, to my thinking, is the California nutmeg tree, *Torreya californica.* I ignore, for sufficient reason, the different generic designation adopted in some books more recent than the work of Brewer and Watson. So far as my word goes, my distinguished ——th cousin shall not be robbed of his one genus. Mr. Clark, who remembered Dr. Torrey's and Dr. Gray's visits to the tree, and whose sympathetic account of the affectionate relations subsisting between these two scholars was deeply interesting, instructed me where to look for the nearest examples, at a point below the Cascades, — some eight miles down the El Portal road, — and I devoted a long day to the making of their acquaintance.

It was the twentieth of June, the weather had turned summerish, and the road, which had been as dusty as possible — a disgrace to the nation that owns it — five or six weeks before, when I entered the Valley, was by this time very much dustier. But the river, hastening from the mountains to the sea, was close at my side, garrulous of thoughts and fancies, histories and dreams, and between it and the birds, the trees, and the innumerable wild flowers, I must have been a dull stick not to be abundantly entertained. An ouzel, fishing for something on the flat, inclined surface of a broad boulder in midstream, just where the rapids were wildest, was compelled to spring into the air every minute or so as a sudden big wave threatened to carry it away. It seemed to be playing with death; once fairly caught in that mad whirl, and nothing could save it. Again and again I looked to see it go, as the angry waters clutched at it; but it was always a shaving too quick for them. Syringa and calycanthus ("sweet-shrub"—faintly ill-scented!) were in blossom, and the brilliant pink godetia—a name which may suggest nothing to the Eastern reader, but which to an old Californian like myself stands for all that is brightest and showiest in parched wayside gardens—never made a more effective display; and all in all, though I had walked over the longer part of the same road within twenty-four hours, the day was a pure delight. If it gains a little something in the retrospect, it is all the more like a picture,

— which must be framed and hung at a suitable distance before we truly see it.

The trees of which I had come in search were recognizable at a glance; the leaves, of a remarkably vivid green, bearing a strong resemblance to those of the hemlock, but sharp as needles, as if to cry "Hands off!" the flaky gray bark, most incongruously like that of some kind of white oak; while the green fruits, prettily spaced ornamental pendants, were really for shape and size not a little like nutmegs: a surprising crop, surely, to be hanging amid such foliage. The largest of the few examples that I saw (they grow plentifully along the road a little farther down, and may be picked out readily from a carriage-seat, as I discovered later) might have been, I thought, about fifty feet in height.

This tree (the species, I mean), whose only congeners are found in Florida, China, and Japan, may be considered as one of four that lend a notable distinction to the Californian silva, the others being the Torrey pine, the Monterey pine, and the Monterey cypress. No one of them occurs anywhere in the world outside of California, and the nutmeg is the only member of the quartette that ventures more than a few miles inland. Stranded species we may assume them to be, formerly of wider range, but now — how or why there is none to inform us — surviving only within these extraordinarily narrow limits. For my part, having seen the other three, I would cheerfully have walked twice as far to look upon, and put my hands upon, this fourth one, in its characters the most strikingly original of them all.

The most exciting thing found at Inspiration Point, however, not forgetting a transient evening grosbeak, whose transiency, by the bye, absolute novelty that he was, drove me well-nigh frantic, for with a flash of white wings he was gone almost before I could say I had seen him, — my most exciting thing was no bird, not even this proudly dressed, long-sought stranger, but a bear. I was passing a thicket of low ceanothus bushes, an almost impenetrable natural hedge bordering the road, when I was startled by a sudden commotion as of some large animal scrambling hurriedly out of it on the farther side, directly opposite. A deer, I thought, but the next instant I saw it, — a brown bear; and in another instant my field-glass was focused upon it as it ran or walked (I could not have told which five minutes afterward — such virtue resides in eyewitness testimony) away from me up the slope. Then, at ten or twelve rods' distance, as I guessed, it halted and faced about to look at the intruder;

after which it took to its awkward legs again, and shambled out of sight amid the underbrush.

Henceforward, of course, I had new motives for heading my day's tramp this way: I might see the bear again, or, better still, the grosbeak. But I never caught a second glimpse of either, though once I must have been at comfortably close quarters with the bear, to judge by certain asthmatic, half-grunting noises that reached me out of the wood.

Of my own knowledge, it is fair to admit, I could not have presumed to speak with even this limited measure of assurance concerning the authorship of the noises in question; but an old guide, to whom I described them shortly afterward, responded at once, "A bear"; and old Sierra Nevada guides, I feel sure, are reasonably competent to speak upon that branch of natural history, although, what is not surprising, I have not always found them deeply versed in matters ornithological. One of the best of them, for example, a man with whom I often found it profitable to hold converse, when I called his attention to a water-ouzel's nest under one of the bridges, to which the anxious mother, regardless of frequent passers overhead, was hurrying every few minutes with another morsel of food gleaned from the bottom of the river, answered, "Yes, I have noticed it, — a robin's nest."

"A robin's nest!" said I. "No, indeed. Haven't you seen the bird diving headfirst, like a naked schoolboy, off that stump yonder.

"Why, yes," said the guide, "I 've often seen her diving into the water; but I supposed she was a robin."

On my questioning him further he gave it as his opinion that there might be half a dozen kinds of birds about the Valley, and he was mightily astonished when I informed him that even in my brief stay I had counted more than eighty. And still I believe he would know a bear when he saw it, or a bear's grunt when he heard it; for bears, naturally enough, — being so much larger, for one thing, — are more generally popular than birds among men of his way of life and thought.

His notion of the robin as a natatorial performer, by the bye, recalls something that happened lately to a friend of mine, an ornithologist of national reputation. He was on a first visit to southern California, and was walking one day with a lady, a recent acquaintance, when she suddenly exclaimed: —

"Oh, Mr. A., you were wishing to see roadrunners. There they are, a whole flock of them, on the beach."

"Those?" said Mr. A., a man of distinguished native politeness, — like ornithologists in general, — "why, I have been taking those for gulls."

"Not at all," said the lady, "they are road-runners."

"But," said Mr. A., still unconvinced, I suppose, but still polite, "I understood that road-runners were to be looked for on the dry uplands."

"Oh, no," insisted the lady, who had no objection to instructing a specialist; "you 'll always find them, plenty of them, right along the shore."

And there the lessson ended.

"Keep your ears open, my son," said a wise man, "and in process of time you may get to know something."

Inspiration Point, as its name implies ("Perspiration Point," a profane young fellow called it one day, as he halted near me, puffing for breath and mopping his forehead), is justly renowned for its prospect of the Valley, which here — where in the old days the visitor used first to see it — lies visible in all its loveliness and grandeur almost from end to end. This enchanting prospect I would stop to enjoy, while eating my luncheon, after a visit among the marvelous sugar pines (whose long, outstretched arms seemed always to be blessing the world, as I am sure they blessed me) in the forest a mile or two beyond.

Sometimes, one day of days in particular, the lights and shadows favored me to an extraordinary degree, and I realized anew how fond I am, and have been ever since a winter on the Arizona Desert, with the Santa Catalina Mountains always before me, of what I am accustomed to call, affectionately, "illuminated grays." At such hours Cloud's Rest and Half Dome, which from this point seem to close the Valley, were of a ravishingly lustrous, silvery whiteness, set in fine relief by contrast with the dark vegetation-clad slope that ran, or seemed to run, from Sentinel Dome down to the valley-level. This distant luminous gray is the chief beauty of bare granite; and a very great beauty it is. I believe it would be impossible for me ever to weary of it, more than of the beauty of level green meadows (or brown meadows, either), or of a deciduous New Hampshire forest looked upon from above.

I alluded to myself just now as an old Californian, and as far as my standing in the Yosemite was concerned I might have said, without jesting, that before I had been there three weeks I had come to be regarded as one of its oldest inhabitants; and this (which was the painful part of it) in a double sense. Again and again I overheard the guides speak of "that old man." "I meet that old man everywhere," one of them would say. (They took it for granted, apparently, that, with all the rest, I must be a little hard of hearing.) It seemed a thing against the order of nature, I suppose, that the wearer of such a beard should be so continually on his legs; and especially that he should be trudging to the same places, so high up and so far off, for the second or third time.

On one occasion, when I was halfway up the Glacier Point trail, I met a company of men and women coming down, and one of the more matronly of the women kindly lingered to pass the time of day with the stranger. Did n't he find the trail pretty steep? she inquired. And when he told her at what a moderate pace he was taking it, and that he purposed remaining at the summit overnight, she patted him affectionately on the shoulder (such liberties will the most virtuous female sometimes take when exhilarated by a mountain atmosphere), and assured him that he was behaving very sensibly. He knew that he was, but it comforted him to have her tell him so.

Again, in the middle of my hardest day's work, as I began a rather tiresome long ascent following a brief level space at the head of Nevada Fall, two young fellows with fishing-rods came suddenly round a bend in front, — on the way to Little Yosemite, it seemed likely, — and as the leader caught sight of me he broke out: "Well, old boy, you 've got quite a trip before you. Yes, sir, it 's quite a trip." And with that he proceeded to enlarge upon the theme with no little earnestness, evidently considering it a matter of great uncertainty whether so ancient a mariner would ever come to port.

And yet I was no Methuselah, I inwardly protested. If I was "goin' on ——ty," which I could not deny, I had still a few laps to make before passing finally under the wire.

And if it surprised other people that a man should stay here so long and repeat his walks so often, it was perhaps an equal surprise to him that so many well-dressed, intelligent-appearing persons, finding themselves surrounded with all this grandeur, should be contented to stare about them for a day or two, expend a few expletives, snap a camera at this and that, and anon be off again.

One man, it is true, gave me what I had to confess might be, in his case, a valid excuse for brevity. A Southern gentleman he was, as I should have divined at once from the engaging, softly musical quality of his voice. He began with some question about a squirrel, — which had surprised him by running into a hole in the ground, — and after a word or two more called my attention to a little bunch of wild roses which he carried in his hand. They were fragrant, he said; had I ever noticed it? And when I remarked that I should have supposed them to be common in Tennessee, he explained that at home he never went to places where such things were to be looked for. He had discovered the perfume of wild roses as Thoreau discovered the sweetness of white oak acorns, I thought to myself, and so far was in good company. Then he told me that he had arrived in the Valley on the noon of the day before, had found it grand and beautiful beyond all his dreams, — "ravishing" was one of his words, — and was going out again, not of necessity but from choice, that very afternoon. I manifested a natural surprise, and he explained that he "did n't wish to lose the thrill." He had seen the picture once and, consciously or unconsciously, was following Emerson's advice never to look at it again. So this time, too, he was in excellent company.

For my part, I cannot afford to be so sparing in my use of good things. My æsthetic faculty, it would appear, is less prompt than some other men's. Its method is not so much an act as a process. In the appreciation of natural scenery, at all events, as I have before now confessed, I am not apt to get very far, comparatively speaking, on the first day. I must have time, — time and a liberal chance for repetition. And in the Yosemite, which is as rich in modest loveliness as in spectacular grandeur, a fact of which far too little is made, I know perfectly well that there are countless beauties which I have never seen (more and more of them were coming to light up to my very last day), as well as countless others that I should rejoice to see again, or, better still, to live with. Give me the opportunity, say I, and I will cheerfully risk all danger of disillusion, or, as my friend of the wild roses more feelingly expressed it, the "loss of the thrill."

A BIRD-GAZER AT THE GRAND CAÑON

THE bird-gazer is peculiar. This is not spoken of bird-gazers in general, who may be much like other people, for aught we know, but of a certain particular member of the fraternity, the adventures of whose mind in the face of one of the undisputed wonders of the world are here to be briefly recounted.

He is a lover of scenery. At least, he so regards himself. As he goes about among his fellows, he finds few who spend more time, or seem to experience more delight, in looking at the beauty that surrounds them. He would not rank himself, of course, with the eloquent specialists in this line, — with Wordsworth or Thoreau, to cite two widely dissimilar examples; but, as compared with the general run of more or less intelligent men, he seldom finds occasion to feel ashamed of himself for anything like indifference to the "goings-on of earth and sky." He is as likely as almost any one he knows to consume a half-hour over a sunset, or to sit a long while under the charm of a Massachusetts meadow or a New Hampshire valley. Common beauty appeals to him. His spirit is refreshed by it. He *relishes* it, to use a word that he himself uses often. But with all this (and here we come to the peculiarity), the exceptional and the stupendous are apt to leave him comparatively unaffected. As he says sometimes, meaning, perhaps, to justify his eccentricity, he admires the grace of the human figure, but takes no particular interest in giants or dwarfs. These excite curiosity, as a matter of course, but for his part he would not go far out of his way to stare at them.

The comparison is rather beside the mark. He would own as much himself. Indeed, he had come a long distance out of his way to see the Grand Cañon of the Colorado. But, after all, to hear some of the things he began by saying about it (though you would not have heard them, since he had the discretion to say them to himself), you might have inferred that this stupendous rift in the earth's surface was to him, for the moment, at least, a something rather monstrous than beautiful.

He reached the Cañon on a bright Saturday morning in December. All day Thursday he had ridden over the prairies of Kansas, gazing out of the car window, and repeating with "relish" Stevenson's line, —

> "Under the wide and starry sky."

There were no stars in sight, naturally enough, but that did not concern him. It was the word "wide" that pleased his imagination. Whether he should die gladly when the time came, as Stevenson felt so sure of doing, he was unprepared to say; but for the present hour, at any rate, he was living gladly, profoundly enjoying the sense of vastness with which that wide Kansas sky inspired him. A wide sky it surely was, with scarcely so much as an apple tree to narrow it. As often as not there was nothing to point the horizon but a haycock or two an unknown number of miles away.

Some of his traveling companions seemed to find the prospect depressing, and the day of the longest, but the bird-gazer passed the hours in surprising content. He almost believed that he should like to live in Kansas, New England Highlander though he is. Unbroken horizons appeared to agree with him.

At midnight, or thereabout, he woke to hear the engines puffing as if out of breath. The grade must be steep. Unless he was deceived, he could feel the inclination of the car as he lay in bed. Then up went the curtain. Hills loomed all about, with here and there a solitary pine tree standing in the moonlight like a sentry. "You are in Colorado," one of them said; and the gazer knew it.

No more prairie. The earth was all heaved up into hills. And just then the train ran into the darkness of a tunnel, and when it emerged, the traveler was in New Mexico.

All that day he journeyed among hills, now near, now far, now high, now low, now wooded, now bare as so many gravel heaps ("not mountains, just buttes," a train-hand told him), now in ranges, now solitary. Indian villages, a long run along the Rio Grande, a stop at Albuquerque, brilliantly colored cliffs and crags, a gorgeous sunset, — indeed, it was a memorable, many-featured day. And in the morning, after miles of level pine forest, — the Coconino Plateau, — he was at the Grand Cañon, where he had desired to be.

He was not disappointed. Wise men seldom are. He had known perfectly well that he should not see the wonder and glory of the place at a first look. His mind is slow, and he has lived with it long enough to have learned a little of its weakness. The Cañon was astounding, unspeakable. Words were never made that could express it. And the shapes and the colors! "Magnificent! Magnificent!" he said. "But it is too much like the pictures. I must wait till they have been forgotten, and I can see the Cañon for itself."

So he wandered off into the woods, an endless forest of pines and cedars. Perhaps he should find a bird or two. And so it was; he had gone but a little way before he came upon a flock of snowbirds. But they were not the snowbirds he was accustomed to see in New England. Some among them had black heads and breasts, with rather dull brown backs, and a suffusion of the same color along the sides of the body. Lovely creatures they were; perfectly natural, — true snowbirds to anybody's eye, — yet recognizable instantly as something quite new and strange. And some were all of an exquisite soft gray, as well above as below, except that they had bright chestnut-brown backs and black lores, — that is to say, a black spot on each side of the head between the eye and the bill. These were neater even than the others, if that were possible, and decidedly more striking a novelty. Our pilgrim was at once in high spirits. What bird-man but would have been? On getting back to the hotel and the Handbook, he would know what to call his new acquaintances. So he promised himself; but as things turned out, the question was not so simple as he had assumed. He was obliged to see the black-headed one (the Sierra junco) again to make sure of a detail he had omitted to note; while as for the gray one, it was not till he had studied the birds and the book for two days that he was fully settled how to name it.

The race of juncos is highly variable in this Western country (eleven species and subspecies), and there were several nice points demanding attention. Luckily the birds could always be found with a little searching; and the oftener they were seen, the prettier they looked, especially the lighter-colored one, the gray-headed junco, as ornithologists name it. After all, thought the bird-gazer, the Quaker taste in colors is not half so bad as it might be. But it was wonderful how much that little patch of black (a clever beauty-spot, such as he seemed to remember having seen ladies wear) heightened and set off the bird's general appearance. He greatly enjoyed the sight of both species, as they fed in the road or under the sage-brush bushes, snapping their tails open nervously at short intervals (as fine ladies do their fans), just like their Eastern relatives.

"Yes, yes," he said, with a sense of relief; "I may be a little slow with cañons, but I do not need a week or two in which to appreciate the beauty of a snowbird. This is something within my capacity."

It is no small part of the comfort and success of life to recognize one's limitations and be reconciled to them.

This first ramble, which did not extend far, disclosed surprisingly little of animal life. At an elevation of seven thousand feet winter is winter, even in Arizona. The mixed flock of snowbirds just mentioned, a jack rabbit that bounded off into the woods with flying leaps, and a bevy of chickadees that got away from the rambler before their specific identity could be established, these were all.

Then, as he returned in the direction of the hotel, his attention was taken by a two-story house which some one — a photographer, by the sign over the door — had built on a narrow shelf, barely wide enough to hold it, a little below the top of the Cañon wall, and he went down the footpath, the beginning of Bright Angel Trail, as it turned out, to inspect it. A knock brought a young man up from below, with an invitation to enter. An eerie perch it was, and no mistake. From the second-story back door, which had neither steps nor balcony, but opened upon space, one had only to leap over a narrow wooden platform, one story below, to land upon the rocks, a thousand feet, perhaps, down the Cañon.

The photographer was explaining the superior advantages of the site for artistic purposes, when a jay dropped into a pine tree just out of reach; a crestless, long-tailed jay, wearing a beautiful fan-shaped decoration on its front; seen at a glance to be a congener of the Florida jay, whose exceeding tameness and other odd ways make so lively an impression upon visitors along the east coast of that peninsula. On being asked if it was often seen, the man replied, "Oh, yes, it is common here. But it isn't a jay, is it?" he added; and, being assured that such was the case, he said, "Well, we have another jay much bigger than this." At the moment it did not occur to the visitor to ask for particulars; but it transpired later, as he had suspected it would, knowing from the Handbook what kinds of jays might on general grounds be looked for in this region, that the "much bigger" bird was the long-crested jay, which at the most measures about a quarter of an inch more than the one, the Woodhouse jay by name, about which he and the photographer had been conferring. A capital example, it seemed, of how much a certain style and carriage (with a lordly crest) can do in the way of swelling a bird's, as well as a man's, apparent size and importance. Have we not read somewhere that Napoleon could on occasion look some inches taller than he really was?

Meanwhile, as soon as luncheon was disposed of, the bird-gazer, still with jays troubling his mind, started along the rim of the Cañon, picking his way among stones, dodging the deeper snows and the softer mud-spots, toward O'Neill's Point, which could be seen, a mile or so eastward, jutting out over the abyss, as if on purpose for a spectator's convenience. So he walked, stopping every few steps to look and listen, the stupendous chasm on one side and the pine and cedar forest on the other. Mostly, as in duty bound, he gave his thoughts to the Cañon; but if a bird so much as peeped, his eyes were after it.

It was during this jaunt, indeed, that he made the acquaintance of the mountain chickadee and the gray titmouse, two Westerners well worth any man's knowing. The mountain chickadee, with whose striking portrait he had long been familiar, is a pretty close duplicate of the common black-capped chickadee of the Northeastern States, except that the black side of its head is broken by a noticeable white stripe above the eye. If all birds were thus plainly tagged, the lister's work would, perhaps, be almost too easy. At least, it would be much less exciting.

This mountain chickadee has the familiar *dee-dee* of the Eastern bird,—though in a recognizably different tone and with a different prefatory note, — a sweet, thin-voiced, two-syllabled whistle, or song, and the characteristic hurried set of sharp, top-of-the-scale, sibilant notes, which, as we may conclude, led the Indians of Maine — so

Thoreau tells us — to call the chickadee *Keecunnilessu.*

The gray titmouse is gray throughout, eschewing all ornament except a smart little backward-pointing crest of gray feathers. In general shape, and especially in something about the setting of the eye, it suggests that monotonous and persistent whistler, the tufted tit of the Southeastern States. Both these novelties, as well as the slender-billed nuthatch (the common white-breasted nuthatch, with variations, especially of a vocal sort), which seemed to be traveling with them, were to prove regular, every-day birds in the forest hereabout.

All in all, whatever he might yet think of the Cañon, our rambler's first day on its rim could be accepted as fairly successful, with five new species added to his slender stock of ornithological knowledge.

The next morning, bright and early (or rather dark and early, for he had breakfasted and was in the woods long before sunrise), he took the road in the opposite direction. He would go to Rowe's Point, — another natural observatory to which all guests of the hotel are presumed to drive, — partly to see the Cañon, and partly to see the forest and its inhabitants. The trees, as has been said, are mostly — almost entirely —

pines and cedars. The pines along the Cañon's edge (there are two taller species, "yellow" and "black," in the slightly lower valleys of the plateau) are small, with extremely short leaves, — so short that very young trees look confusingly like firs, — two to the sheath, and prickly cones hardly bigger than peas. *Piñons*, the stranger was afterward bidden to call them, which he proceeded to do, with lively satisfaction. It is always a pleasure to find a name out of a book beginning to mean something. The cedars, many of them ancient-looking (a thousand years old, some of them might well enough be), and loaded with mistletoe, bear a general resemblance to the red cedar of the East (though their berries are much larger), and are remarkable, even at first glance, for branching literally at the ground, making one feel as if the earth must have been filled in about them after they were grown.

Here and there was an abundance of a shrub, or small tree, which, the photographer had informed the newcomer, was known locally as the Mexican quinine bush, still showing its last season's straw-colored flowers, — many stamens and six prodigiously long, feathered styles in a spreading, bell-shaped, five-lobed corolla. The foliage was much like a cedar's in appearance, and when crushed yielded a resiny, colorless substance and an extraordinarily pungent and persistent, agreeably medicinal odor.

The bird-gazer was noting these details (the last-mentioned bush, especially, being a most interesting one, with which he hoped some time or other to come to a better understanding), and now and then pushing out to the brink of the Cañon, every point affording a change of prospect, when, to his surprise, he found himself at the end of his jaunt.

Here, surely, was a grand outlook. He was glad he had come. The Cañon was beginning to fasten its hold upon him. Far down (a good part of a mile down) could be seen a stretch of the Colorado River, and now for the first time he heard its voice, the only sound that had yet reached him out of the abyss.

"The silent Cañon," he had caught himself murmuring the day before. Indeed, its silence had impressed him almost as much as its extent, its wealth of color, and its strange architectural forms, which last, one may almost say, are what chiefly give to the Cañon its peculiar character. One gazes upon the huge, symmetrical artificial-looking constructions ("like the visible dream of an architect gone mad"), and thinks of Coleridge's lines — at least our bird-gazer thought of them: —

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea."

Scores of times he had repeated the verses to himself during the last day or two (they are worth repeating for their music, though no less a critic than William Hazlitt pronounced the poem "a mixture of raving and driveling"), and now, when he saw the sacred river, its muddiness visible a mile away, the sight gave him an unpleasant shock. The river that the opium-eating poet saw could never have been of that complexion.

Some such romantic feeling as this was upon him, perhaps, when, happening to turn his head, he beheld close behind him, at the tip of a low, dead tree, the form of a strange bird. "Now, pray, what can you be?" he exclaimed under his breath; and in one moment the Cañon was a thousand miles off. Some distance back he had heard a musical chorus, suggestive to his ear of a chorus of pine grosbeaks, and then had seen the flock for an instant, as it flew across a clear space among the trees, moving toward the rim of the Cañon. And now here was a bird right before him, a finch of some kind, a female, in all probability (if it had only been a male in bright

THE GRAND CAÑON

diagnostic plumage!), streaked with dark underneath, sporting a long tail (for a finch), and for its best mark having a broad whitish or grayish band over the eye. So much he saw, and then it was gone, uttering as it flew the same notes that he had heard from the flock shortly before. Probably it was one of the various purple finches,—Cassin's, as likely as any, a species due in this general region, and having a longish tail. "Probably!"—that is an uncomfortable word for a bird-gazer, but in the present case there seemed no possibility of bettering it; and, when all is said, probability is a kind of half-loaf, to say the worst of it, a little better than nothing.

Anyhow, the bird was gone, and gone for good, and with it had departed for the time being all the gazer's interest in the sacred river, and in the gaudy colors and bizarre shapes of the great chasm. A path beckoned him into the woods, and, with birds in his eye, he took it. It was well he did, for he had hardly more than started before he stopped short. Hark! Was n't that a robin's note? Yes, somewhere before him, out among the low piñons, the bird was cackling at short intervals,—the very same cackle that a Massachusetts robin utters when it finds itself astray from the flock. Half a dozen times or more the anxious sounds were repeated, while the listener edged this way and that, more anxious than the bird, twice over, scanning the tops of the trees for a sight of the ruddy breast. He saw nothing, and anon all was silent. The bird had eluded him. A Western robin, he supposed it must have been, and as such he would have given something for a sight of it. Well, if he lived a week or two longer, he should be in California, and there, with any kind of luck, he would find out for himself, what no book had ever been considerate enough to tell him, whether the calls of *propinqua* are so exactly the same as those of plain *migratoria*. Meantime he had added another name to his Grand Cañon list, and was back at the Point for another turn with the Eighth Wonder.

And then, as frequently before and after, he laughed quietly at his foolish self, so taken with the sight of a bird, and so inadequately moved by all this transcendent spectacle of form and color. Verily, as common wisdom has it, it takes all kinds to make a world; and among the all kinds there must needs be a few odd ones.

But for all his laughing, he was really not quite so absurdly insensible as he was perversely inclined to make out. The Wonder was growing upon him. He looked at it oftener and longer, and with something more of pleasurable emotion, though it was still too monstrous, too strange, too little related to any natural feeling. He should need to live on its rim for months or years before it would affect him according to its deserts. Nay, he should have to spend long whiles down in its depths; for though the present slipperiness of the steep, snow-covered trail made the descent seem an imprudent venture for so chronic a graybeard, yet he did more than once go down the first few zigzags, —far enough to feel the awful stillness and loneliness of the place, and to realize something of the power of those frowning walls over the human spirit.

At such times it was, especially, that he felt a desire to come here again, in a more propitious season, and to spend some days, at least, on one of those lower plateaus, or on the bank of some far-down stream. Birds and flowers would fill the place, the cañon wren would sing to him, and the short, shut-in days would pass over his head like a dream. Even as it was, there is no telling how far down he might sooner or later have ventured, the desire increasing upon him, but for a wild, all-day snow-storm, which, for the remainder of his stay, put all such projects out of the question.

An hour after hearing the robin, while on his return to the hotel, he came upon another bird of about the same degree of novelty, — a brown creeper, looking almost as New-Englandish as the robin's voice had sounded; the same pepper-and-salt coat, the same faint, quick *seep*, a mere nothing of a sound, yet known on the instant for what it is, anywhere on the continent, and the same trick of beginning always at the bottom of the tree and hitching its way upward. Yet it was not exactly the bird of New England, after all; for when the observer met with it again, as he did on sundry occasions (always a single bird, — another characteristic trait), he perceived, or fancied he perceived, that its coat was of a lighter shade than he had been accustomed to see. The Rocky Mountain creeper, the book instructed him to call it, and the name sounded sweet to him. At almost the same minute, too, he had his first clear sight of another Rocky Mountain bird, — the Rocky Mountain hairy woodpecker. This was to prove one of the very common inhabitants of the plateau. Its emphatic, perfectly natural-sounding calls were heard many times daily, and would have passed without remark anywhere in the East. In personal appearance, however, the bird is clearly enough distinguished, even at first sight, by the all but solid blackness of its wings.

After luncheon the bird-gazer again took the field (the altitude was congenial to him, and there was no staying indoors), and was soon in a fever of excitement over two jays that were chasing each other about in the tops of some tall yellow pines. It was evident at once that they were extremely dark in color and had most extraordinarily conspicuous topknots. "The long-crested," he said to himself, one of the birds he most earnestly desired to see. "Now is my chance," he thought; and it should not be his fault if he missed it.

From tree to tree the birds went, now together, now separately, uttering a kind of grunting note, strangely suggestive of the gray squirrel, ridiculous as the comparison may sound; and still he could never get either of them with a satisfactory light on its face, which, he knew, should be marked (if his opinion as to their identity was correct) by narrow up-and-down white lines on the forehead, and a little patch of the same color over each eye.

At last one dropped to the ground, a happy chance, and began feeding on something found there; and now, after patient stalking, our man had his field-glass on the bird under the best of conditions. All the marks were present. And what a beauty! (and what a crest!)— one of the most striking of all North American birds, of itself a sufficient reward for his winter visit to the Grand Cañon. If he were to tell the truth, he would, perhaps, confess that the sight of it afforded him — for the moment — almost as keen a pleasure as that of the Cañon itself. And he might have said as much of a flock of eight or ten pygmy nuthatches, engaging creatures, seen on three occasions, with notes all of a finch-like quality (in that respect like those of the little brown-headed nuthatches of the Southern States), and one — a note of alarm, it seemed — almost or quite indistinguishable from the sharp *kip, kip* of the red crossbill. The hobbyist, — and why should any of us feel like shirking the name, since we are all hobbyists of one sort or another, — the hobbyist, lucky man, has joys with which no stranger intermeddleth.

Every one to whom our particular hobbyist ventured to speak upon the subject assured him that there were no birds here at this season; and indeed, for long spells together, this seemed, even to him, to be something like true. The Coconino forest is so almost boundless that the winter denizens of it, mostly moving about in little companies, are by no means "enough to go round," as one of the hobbyist's outdoor cronies is given to saying. So it was that our bird-gazer often sauntered for an hour without being rewarded by so much as a lisp; yet he felt sure all the while, and the result always bore out his faith, that even here, and in winter, and on this very day, time and patience could not be spent altogether in vain. If he saw nothing, as sometimes was true, on the two or three miles to Rowe's Point, for example, why, there was still the chance of something on the return. The very spot that had been vacant at eight o'clock might be astir with wings an hour or two later; for, as we say, winter birds, with no family duties to tie them, and the cool weather to enliven them, are continually on the go.

Thus it happened that the bird-gazer, retracing his steps after a long jaunt that had shown him nothing (nothing in his special line, that is to say; there is always *something* for a sensible pair of eyes to look at), was brought to the suddenest kind of standstill by the sight of two or three birds on the ground a few rods in advance. "Bluebirds! Bluebirds!" he said. And so they were, here in the very midst of the wood, impossible as the encounter seemed to a man accustomed only to the bluebird of the East, which might almost as soon be looked for upon a mill-pond as in a forest. His glass covered one of them. All its visible under parts were blue! It moved out of sight, and the glass was leveled upon another, and then upon another, as opportunity offered. And all but the first one had the regular red-earth breast, with blue throats and bellies, and reddish or chestnut-colored backs. Then, to the observer's sorrow, they suddenly took wing with a chorus of sweet, perfectly familiar calls, and in a moment were gone. The all-blue one (the mountain, or arctic, bluebird, as it is called) was new to him. The others, of the kind known as the chestnut-backed bluebird, he had seen once or twice on a previous visit to the Southwest. Whether on the deserts of southern Arizona, or here in the mountain forests of northern Arizona, they were good to meet.

If only they would have stayed a bit to be looked at, or if they could have been pursued, as in New England one pursues the first spring bluebird from apple orchard to apple orchard for pure joy of seeing and hearing it! But they were gone whither there was no such thing as following them,—into the Cañon, to judge by the course taken,—and neither they, nor any like them, were seen or heard afterward.

They had not been alone, however, and the bird-gazer was still for a few minutes abundantly busy. Mountain chickadees were lisping and *dee*-ing, and one of them gave out once, as if on purpose for the Yankee listener's benefit, his brief, musical whistle. "Thank you," said the

Yankee; "do it again." But the singer, as singers will, refused the encore. One or two nuthatches and a hairy woodpecker were with the group, almost as a matter of course, and at the last minute the tiniest bunch of feathers was seen fluttering about the twigs of a pine. None but a kinglet could dance on the wing in just that tricksy fashion; and, true enough, a kinglet it was, a goldcrest, seen for a glance or two only, but, even so, revealing a strangely conspicuous white or whitish band on the side of the crown. Another Rocky Mountain stranger, if you please, the Rocky Mountain goldcrest. Two new birds within five minutes. Perhaps the bird-gazer did not go on his way rejoicing! The road was rough, —frozen every night, and muddy to desperation every afternoon,—but a hobby could still be ridden over it with comfort.

And here seems a good place in which to mention one of the Yankee visitor's meteorological surprises. Somebody had spoken to him of cold weather lately at the Cañon,—zero or under,—and he mentioned the report to his friend the photographer. "Oh, yes," was the answer; "probably the mercury has not been far from zero for the last two mornings."

The visitor intimated incredulity; he had been strolling in the woods before sunrise on both the mornings in question, standing still a considerable part of the time to make notes or listen, and never once thinking of ears or fingers; upon which the photographer smiled and advised him to consult the railroad station-master, who, it appeared, had a government thermometer, and was the official keeper of the local weather record. Well, the station-master was complaisant, although an official, and, on turning to his tally-sheet, found that on the two previous mornings the glass had registered respectively zero and two above zero.

The man from Massachusetts was dumb. He had heard, as every one has, of the efficacy of a dry atmosphere in tempering the impression of cold, but he found at this minute that he had never really taken it in. If he had known the standing of the thermometer he certainly would not have worn his summer hat, and would probably have thought it prudent now and then to try his ears. Three or four mornings afterward, though the mercury was only a few degrees lower (five degrees below zero), he confesses that he did not loiter. With a raw wind from the north and the air full of snow, a somewhat rapid gait was taken, as by instinct. In fact, the weather was so much like home that it almost made him homesick—for California.

On the second of the two mornings first mentioned, he had sauntered to O'Neill's Point, and had remarked, as before, how the white frost covered everything (sign of a warm, pleasant, day in New England), giving an extra touch of pallor even to the pallid sage-brush. He had remarked, also, how warmly an old Indian squaw was wrapped as she came riding through the woods on horseback. "Good morning," said the bird-gazer, as they met. "Umph," said the squaw. Ah, she does n't understand English, thought the bird-gazer, and he tried her with "Buenos dias." "Umph," she answered again; and the two parted as strangers. He might have had better luck with a chickadee.

Only the commoner birds had been found, till, on the return, in a break in the forest, of which break the sage-brush, always straitened for room, had taken possession, he suddenly descried a flock of extremely small birds of a sort entirely strange to him: slender gray birds, with long tails, — like gnatcatchers in that respect, — and some possible, poorly seen darker patch on the side of the head. He looked at them, and looked again (their activity was incessant, and the looks were of the briefest), and then, with a chorus of little nothings, they all took wing. And the bird-gazer, of course, followed on. Twice he came up with them. "Bush-tits," he said to himself; "they can be nothing else." And bush-tits they were, as he feels confident (but he will be surer, he hopes, when he gets to California), of the species known as lead-colored. It was a shame they should have been so restless. There was plenty of sage-brush, on the seeds of which they seemed to be feeding; but, like winter birds in general, they must take a bite here and a bite there, as if, by sampling the same thing in a dozen places, they somehow secured variety. They were gone, at all events, and the bird-gazer was starting back, half jubilant, half disconsolate, toward the road, when, from almost under his feet, a jack rabbit sprang up and, with a leap or two over the sage-brush bushes (a great leg with the hurdles is the jack rabbit), took his black tail out of sight.

Such, by the reader's leave, were some of the trifles with which a Yankee bird-gazer beguiled his long-anticipated, much-talked-about week at the Grand Cañon of the Colorado!

Stevenson begins one of his early essays by remarking, "It is a difficult matter to make the most of any given place." Of course it is; and not only difficult, but impossible, as he would have known, had he been a few years older. There will always remain a corner unexplored, a point of view not taken, a phase of modest beauty imperfectly appreciated. Thoreau himself, it is safe to assert, did not make the most of Concord. And after that what hope is there for the rest of us? Of course, then, the bird-gazer did not make the most of the Grand Cañon. How could he, with the little time at his disposal, the unfavorable season, the exceptionally inclement weather of the latter half of his stay (it was twelve degrees below zero on the last morning, and his farewell communings were nothing like so leisurely as he could have wished), and, chiefest of all, the peculiar limitations of his own nature?

No doubt he might have used words about it, — there is many a fine adjective in the dictionary; but adjectives of themselves prove nothing, unless it be, too often, their user's imbecility. "Is n't it pretty?" he heard a lady ask; and, since he was not addressed, he did not reply, as it was on his tongue's end to do, "No, my dear madam, it is *not* pretty." On another occasion a man pronounced it "a right nice view,"[1] and this time the bird-gazer could only nod a despairing assent.

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[1] It was something to his credit that he did n't say "*awfully* nice," a locution which at this minute the bird-gazer hears from the lips of a lady of his acquaintance. She knows better, no doubt, but cannot help following the fashion in the use of words more than in the purchase of hats, though hats and words be alike barbarous.

How the place *ought* to affect beholders he does not assume to decide; some in one way, perhaps, and some in another. For his own part, if now and then, when he might have been admiring the painted walls and the yawning abyss, he found his eyes resting of their own accord upon the snow-covered San Francisco peaks on the southern horizon, who shall say that he was necessarily in the wrong? A mountain two miles high is a commoner sight than a ravine a mile deep; but since when has commonness or uncommonness been taken as a test of beauty or grandeur? Let every man be pleased with that which pleases him; and as far as possible, — which probably will not be very far, — unless he has the difficult grace of silence, let him tell the truth.

As for the bird-gazer himself, it must be acknowledged, since he calls for truth-telling, that even to the last there remained with him a question whether it lay within the power of this barbaric display of shape and color ever to evoke those deeper, tenderer, more serene and blissful moods of rapturous contemplation, such as, ever and anon, when the time is right, descend upon the waiting soul, responsive to the still, small voice of the commonest and most familiar of humble landscapes.

So let it be, he said, and he stands by it: grandeur to visit, but modest beauty to be at home with.

THE END

INDEX

Alder, 154.
Azalea, 190.

Bay, 155.
Bear, 195, 196.
Bittern, American, 166, 167.
Blackbird, tricolored, 169.
Bluebird, arctic, 223, 224.
Bluebird, chestnut-backed, 223, 224.
Bluebird, Western, 114, 129.
Buckeye, California, 125.
Buffle-head, 86.
Buttercups, 187.
Buzzard, turkey, 58.
Bush-tit, lead-colored, 227, 228.

Calycanthus, 193.
Canvas-back, 86.
Ceanothus, 195.
Cedar, 214.
Chickadee, mountain, 212, 224, 225.
Christmas-berry, 115.
Columbine, 190.
Condor, California, 93-99, 106.
Convolvulus, 190.
Coot, American, 83, 84, 90.
Creeper, California, 142, 143.
Creeper, Rocky Mountain, 219, 220.
Curlew, Eskimo, 36.
Curlew, Hudsonian, 33-36, 85.
Curlew, long-billed, *or* sickle-billed, 35.
Currant, wild, 115.
Cypress, Monterey, 194.

Dipper, American, *or* water-ouzel, 100, 101, 104, 105, 109, 110, 153, 154, 193, 196, 197.
Dogwood, 190.
Duck, ruddy, 86.

Eagle, bald, 98.
Eagle, golden, 96, 107, 114, 190.

Fern, maidenhair, 107.
Finch, Cassin's purple, 217.
Finch, house, *or* linnet, 44.
Flicker, red-shafted, 114.
Flycatcher, Western, 150, 151.
Fulmar, 70.

Ginger, wild, 147.
Godetia, 193.
Godwit, marbled, 36, 45-49.
Goose, wild, 46, 47, 170.
Gooseberry, fuchsia-flowered, 125.
Grosbeak, Western evening, 195.
Grouse, sooty, 191, 192.
Gull, Heermann's, 135.
Gulls, 124.

Hawk, Western red-tailed, 114, 129.
Heart's-ease, mountain, 155.
Heron, great blue, 40.
Holly, California, 115.
Hummingbird, 128, 144.
Hummingbird, Calliope, 191.

Iris, 147.

Jay, California, 96, 114, 142.

INDEX

Jay, coast, 142, 156.
Jay, long-crested, 211, 221, 222.
Jay, Woodhouse's, 210, 211.
Junco, gray-headed, 208–210.
Junco, Sierra, 114, 143, 208–210.

Killdeer, 12–14, 49.
Kingfisher, belted, 163.
Kingfisher, Texas, 163, 164.
Kinglet, Rocky Mountain golden-crowned, 225.
Knot, 40, 41.

Larkspur, 190.
Lily, spatter-dock, 188.
Linnet, 44.

Madroña, 145, 154.
Magpie, yellow-billed, 111–114, 121–129, 168.
Manzanita, 117, 173.
Maple, big-leaf, 154 and note.
Marigold, marsh (*Caltha leptosepala*), 185.
Meadowlark, Western, 44.
Mockingbird, Western, 8.

Nuthatch, pygmy, 222.
Nuthatch, slender-billed, 114, 213.
Nutmeg tree, California, 192, 194, 195.

Oak, tanbark, 145, 146, 154.
Oaks, 117.
Ouzel, water, 100, 101, 104, 105, 109, 110, 153, 154, 193, 196, 197.
Oxalis, redwood, 146.
Oyster-catcher, black, 135.

Pelican, California brown, 8.
Pentstemon, 188, 189.
Pepper-tree, 102.
Phalarope, 77.
Phalarope, Northern, 16, 41, 42, 52–57.
Phalarope, red, 49, 53–55, 57.
Phalarope, Wilson's, 49–54.
Phlox, mountain, 188.
Pigeon, band-tailed, 111, 113, 115, 116, 173.
Pine, Monterey, 194.
Pine, sugar, 198.
Pine, Torrey, 194.
Piñon, 214.
Pipit, *or* titlark, 18–21.
Plover, black-bellied, 62–64.
Plover, semipalmated, 27, 28.
Plover, snowy, 9–12, 40, 49.
Poppy, tree, 115.
Portulaca, 129.
Primrose, 9.
Puffin, tufted, 77, 78.

Quinine bush, Mexican, 214, 215.

Rabbit, jack, 210, 228.
Redwood, 139–142, 144, 145, 147, 148, 154.
Road-runner, 125.
Robin, Western, 102, 114, 117, 217, 218.
Rose, wild, 147, 202.

Sage-brush, 227.
Salmon-berry, 190.
Sanderling, 16–18, 23–28.
Sandpiper, least, 27, 28, 49.
Sandpiper, Western, 49, 59.
Sapsucker, Williamson's, 188.
Scoter, surf, 29, 32, 33.
Scoter, white-winged, 28–33.
Shearwater, black-vented, 76.
Shearwater, dark-bodied, 76.
Shearwater, pink-footed, 76.
Shearwater, sooty, *or* dark-bodied, 76.
Shearwaters, 70–79.
Snow-plant, 190.
Solitaire, Townsend's, 101, 102.

INDEX

Sparrow, fox, 83, 173.
Sparrow, golden-crowned, 116.
Sparrow, thick-billed. *See* Sparrow, fox.
Spatter-dock, 188.
Sun-cups, 124.
Surf-bird, 42, 43, 136–138.
Swallow, violet-green, 191.
Swan, black, 47.
Swan, whistling, 80–92.
Swift, black, 173.
Sycamore, 154.
Syringa, 193.

Tattler, wandering, 132–134.
Tern, Trudeau's, 162, 163.
Thrush, hermit, 144.
Thrush, varied, 144, 145.
Titlark, 18–21.
Titmouse, gray, 212, 213.
Titmouse, plain, 116, 117.
Toothwort, 147.
Torreya californica, 192, 194, 195.
Towhee, spurred, 96.
Trillium, 147.
Tulip, mariposa, 190.
Turkey-buzzard, 58.
Turnstone, black, 36–40, 136.
Turnstone, ruddy, 36, 64–69.

Verbena, seaside, 9.
Violet (*Viola Beckwithii*), 155.
Violet (*Viola sarmentosa*), 147.
Violet, long-stemmed yellow, 124, 147.
Vireo, Hutton's, 107.
Vulture, California, 93–99, 106.
Vulture, turkey, 58.

Wallflower, 107.
Warbler, black-throated green, 164–166.
Warbler, hermit, 152.
Warbler, lutescent, 127.
Warbler, Townsend's, 151.
Water-ouzel, 100, 101, 104, 105, 109, 110, 153, 154, 193, 196, 197.
Wildcat, 59.
Willet, Western, 42, 45, 46.
Woodpecker, California, 142.
Woodpecker, hairy, 143.
Woodpecker, Rocky Mountain hairy, 220.
Wren, cañon, 102, 103, 219.
Wren, Western winter, 142, 143.
Wren-tit, 116.

Yellow-legs, 59–61.

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
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